

MassageTherapy **MEDIA**

M A G A Z I N E

SPRING 2023

MASSAGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Meet therapists and bodyworkers who are breaking the mold and breaking stigmas

► **INSIDE**

The Philanthropist Therapist
Benefits of a Massage Competition
Massage Therapy for Kids
Why you get Hurt in the Massage Room
What you Don't Know About Sensual Massage
Casino Massage

Contents SPRING 2023



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Contributors



EMILY MUSE
Sexologist

Emily is the Co-owner of MUSE Massage Spas, and a Sexologist specializing in erotic connection development, intimate sexual health education, and certified workshop instructor. Based out of Toronto, Canada, she has over 20 years experience in the adult industry, and is an activist in the quest for decriminalized sex work law reform worldwide.



KELLEY STEAD
LMT

Kelley is a licensed massage therapist and the co-owner of Winning Hands LLC, a casino massage company. Her goals involve helping massage therapists achieve financial freedom and independence, as well as introducing the industry to her niche world of casino massage. She is a member of the National Association of Women Business Owners.



MARK LISKEY
LMT

Mark is a massage therapist of 30 years, CE teacher/provider, blogger, writer, and co-producer and co-host of the International Take Care of You School Event. Recently he has written The Pain-Free Massage Therapist, a DIY, "body-mechanics strategies and techniques" book for eliminating pain in the massage room and extending massage careers.



SARAH KING,
RMT

Sarah is a massage therapy educator since 2003 and has had a pediatric focused practice for over a decade. Expanding on her knowledge and skill set, she's taken training including: Yoga for Kids, Brain Gym, NLP, Reiki, Sick Kids Palliative Care Symposium, Online Pediatric Pain curriculum, Autism, LGBTQ2S+ and Mental Health.



VICKI S. WINSTON
LMT

Vicki is an innovative and respected massage industry leader, mentor, and educator. For over 20 years, she has served her Tennessee community with energized focus creating opportunities for massage therapists to collaborate, learn, and excel. She serves as Interim Program Director of The Massage Lab at Roane State Community College.



TERRA NICOLLE
Osteopathic Manual
Therapist

Terra has been in the health & wellness industry for over 30 years and is a Pelvic Floor Specialist and has worked in Africa educating midwives and physios in pelvic floor health. Her unique teaching style and vast knowledge brings passion to a subject just now being explored! Terra is also a Trauma Informed Yoga Therapist assisting in balancing nervous systems.



Massage Therapy MEDIA

MAGAZINE

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EDITOR

Amanda Cooke
acooke.rmt@gmail.com

ART DIRECTOR

Erin Stanley
erin@erinstanleydesigns.com

DIGITAL MEDIA

Mark Chee-Aloy
mark.rkin.rmt@gmail.com

ACCOUNT MANAGER

Monica Pasinato-Forchielli, RMT
monica.fmt.one@gmail.com

SALES MANAGER

Scott Dartnall
scottdartnall@gmail.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Amanda Cooke,
Emily Muse, Kelley Stead, Mark
Liskey, Sarah King, Vicki S. Winston,
Terra Nicolle

PUBLISHED BY

Massage Therapy Media



massagetherapymedia@gmail.com
massagetherapymedia.com

As we develop future issues, we want your input. We want to hear about the great things you're doing and about the things you'd like to learn about through this magazine. Tell us what you have been doing or simply email us your ideas for future articles and features. We'd love to hear from you!

massagetherapymedia@gmail.com



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Ashley Brzezicki



Bobbi Eklund



Brad Norris



Cindy McNeely



Janette Yee



Kevin Mefford



Laurie DiGiullo



Magnus Eklund



Whitney Lowe



Sean-Michael
Latimour



Terra Nicolle



Matthew Howe



Robert Libbey



Felicia Brown



Paul Kohlmeier



BetsyAnn Baron



Boris Prilutsky

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Editor's Note



Amanda Cooke, RMT
Editor

Massage Therapy in the 21st Century

It's time to think outside of the box, off the table, and out of the treatment room

As a RMT going into my 12th year of practice, I never imagined where this profession would take me. When I started my Massage Therapy education in the fall of 2008, Massage Therapy, to me, meant relaxation, oil, dark rooms, soft music, and using my knowledge of anatomy and biomechanics to help people reduce pain, improve range of motion, and keep their tissues healthy. All of those things are still true and have a huge place in the way Massage Therapy is practiced globally by most therapists. What we do is truly incredible and the world is honestly a better place because there are people who continue to learn the science and healing benefits of touch and who use it to help their patients and educate our future therapists.

What I didn't expect was to be sitting in my office on a cold February day in 2023 writing an editorial about Massage Therapists who have dedicated their life to philanthropy and helping to educate and relieve pain in parts of the world with less opportunities than the Western

world; about therapists who found a niche market so lucrative that they are helping other therapists gain financial independence and allowing them to become a boss; about therapists who are dedicated to increasing longevity in our beloved profession by pushing for the therapists' well-being to be prioritized; about therapists whose passion for facilitating healing and movement have taken them out of the treatment room to work holistically with our youngest population; about therapists who compete internationally with others from all over the world speaking the global language of massage; and even about those who provide erotic massage that just want recognition for the work they do and to end the stigma as well as increase comfort and safety for RMTs who shouldn't have to deal with solicitation. No, I did not see this coming at all...but I am so grateful for where this career has taken me and I'm so proud to call our contributors colleagues.

Throughout my career I have had the unique opportunity to meet therapists that do some really cool stuff. I have often heard a similar story of self-discovery with these therapists that led them down the path to ultimately end up in a particular niche, a particular area of practice, learning information that they never knew existed when they were in massage college. That was my story. During my formal education, I didn't have a clear vision into my future as a therapist. I envisioned finding a comfortable environment, maybe a small family practice or large multidisciplinary clinic, renting a room, and working on my own schedule treating patients. Not surprisingly, that is how it all started. But like many other therapists I've had the pleasure of working with, the day to day was not quite filling my cup and I needed more. I went on the search for new and exciting opportunities. That led me to working in a spa part-time, taking on multiple corporate contracts at large companies around the GTA, supervising

in student clinics and student outreaches, and eventually branching out to start a continuing education company with my partner, a successful massage therapy podcast, and now a media company for manual therapists. These were beyond my wildest dreams when deciding on a career in massage therapy.

Parents often tell their children that they can be whatever they want and they can achieve anything. Conversely, there are realists that tell their children to study hard, work hard, and get a career. The messaging that is missing from the dichotomy of "you can be anything" vs "this is the right path to success" is that having a strong sense of who you are- what you like, what you're good at, what is important to you in life, will guide you in your decisions about your future path. Now, this sounds far too simplistic and too vague I admit. What does this have to do with Massage Therapy in the 21st century? A lot I would argue. When it comes to something as culturally ingrained as massage therapy, it takes ambition, creativity, and a desire to break the mold.

Massage Therapy is an ancient healing practice that dates back more than 5000 years. It has been passed down through generations and moved across nations to become a global practice of using manual therapy to assist in healing the body. Traditionally it was based on energy and regulation of the body systems to maintain good health. In more recent times, there has been more research into how and why techniques work and what is actually being affected but what has remained constant is that humans like physical touch, it has healing benefits, and massage therapy isn't going anywhere. What has changed is that people who have an interest in healing or helping people in some way, are good at relating to people, using their hands, have an interest in and fundamental understanding of the human body and human experience, and want a career that allows them to incorporate these things, are now realizing that what is

the traditional view and understanding of what massage therapy can be has massive potential. Humans are so resourceful. So creative. There is massive potential when you know yourself enough to recognize opportunity when it's presented to you.

Our contributors have managed to take their massage careers outside of the typical settings and create fulfilling practices that fill their own cup as well as filling a gap where there is a demand in the marketplace. We had an opportunity a few years ago to sit down with an owner of a licensed body rub parlour. This was traditionally a taboo subject and one that Massage Therapists specifically wanted to stay away from. We did not want to be associated in any way with any type of erotic massage because we are healthcare practitioners. This is true. We do not offer erotic massage yet many of us get solicited for such services and end up in

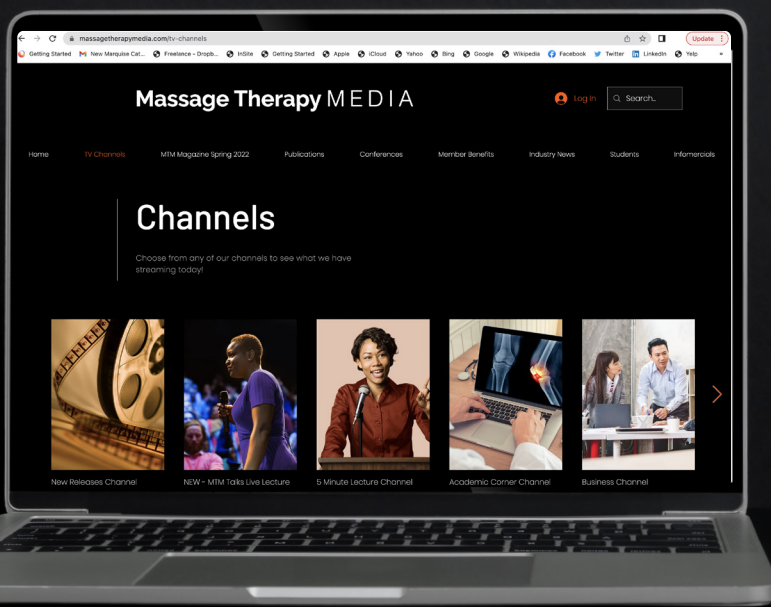
uncomfortable situations. But did you know that it is legal? Did you know there are licenses for this type of profession? And did you know that there is a huge demand for this business. Our goal is to educate Massage Therapists about this and maybe give them some insight into how to deal with scenarios when being put into uncomfortable situations. As regulated healthcare professionals, this is completely outside of our scope of course, but we should be very aware since even in 2023, there are members of society that do not know how to distinguish the two.

Did you know that you could take your Massage career into children's recreational programs? Or into casinos? Did you know that as Massage Therapists you can travel the world and bring your knowledge and skills to either help others who do not have access to therapy and education or to meet with the best of the best from

other countries to see what they are doing to help their patients and how Massage Therapy looks in other parts of the world? Did you know that you could create an entire thriving practice without ever entering an actual clinic or spa? Did you know you can work in an exciting paced environment like a casino? And that it is STILL Massage Therapy? Did you know that what we are often taught in school about the longevity of a massage career might not be true and that we are actually not educated fully on how to optimize our careers? Maybe you did know these things and maybe you aren't sure how to move away from the status quo. This issue is a unique look at the things that maybe aren't always talked about, maybe aren't popular, and maybe could light a fire under you to think outside of your treatment room and ask yourself what is possible for Massage in the 21st century and beyond.

Massage Therapy MEDIA

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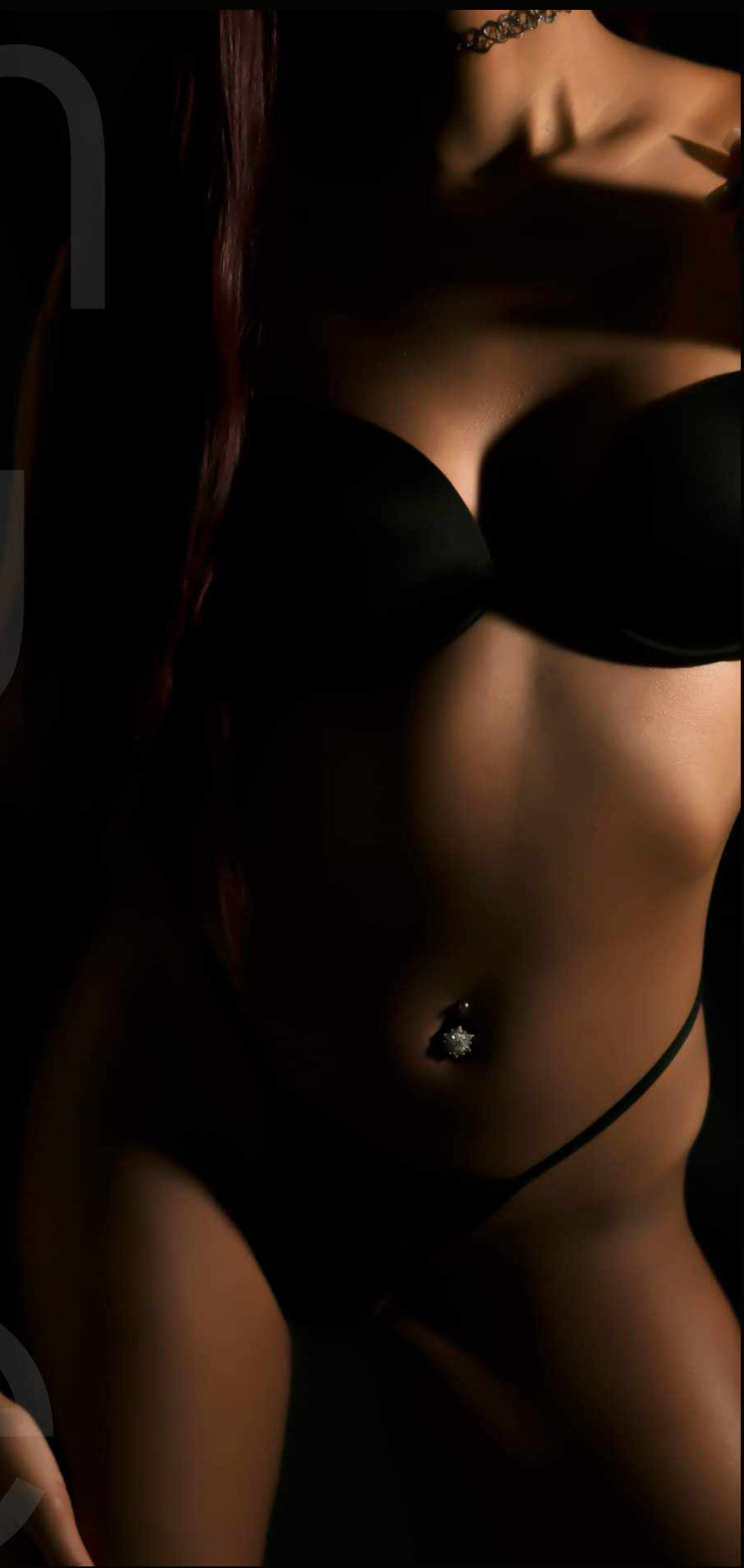


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What you don't know about Sensual Massage

...can there be a happy ending?

BY EMILY MUSE

That moment when your customer reaches his arms out and starts to graze your hips...Or, when a client lifts the sheet and asks "So, what else do you offer?"... For you, that's a moment of dread! But for us, that's ideal!

As the co-owner of MUSE Massage Spa's 2 legal and licensed Body Rub Parlors, our team live for the moments you hate. For us, that's a green light! In total contrast, we love "the reach-out", we have a list of what else we offer, and we are alarmed at anyone covered by a sheet or towel.

Did you know that the Greater Toronto Area has licensed massage parlors? Much like a strip club is licensed to a strip club, and differentiates between a regular night club and a strip bar, the GTA has "happy ending" massage spas! We have a strict set of bylaws, licensing, health codes, and federal laws to abide by. But not all parlors are the same.

MUSE is the brain-child of myself - Emily Muse, and my business partner Riley Muse. After working for years in parlors myself, we noticed a gap in the male-dominated industry for something high-end and female-owned! So, in 2009 we opened MUSE Massage Spas! With a staff of over 40 amazing women, and 2 gorgeous high-end locations, we provide the erotic services that RMTs don't.

And that's fantastic for RMTs! Imagine having a place to send clients who are looking for more? We aim to reduce the crossover of awkward moments and pressure on RMTs to provide sexual services, outside your licensing parameters, and equally refer clients looking for medical-grade massage treatments to fabulous RMTs.

There is so much about our industry that is misunderstood. For example, our spas are fully licensed by each city we are located in (Toronto and Vaughan, specifically). Each of our Massage attendants are also licensed. We spend over 15k per location on licensing annually. All staff require medical checks, criminal background checks, employment verification, and ID. We get regular inspections from bylaw officers to ensure we maintain a standard of professionalism and cleanliness.

Unlike the stigma characterization of "rub 'n tugs", MUSE is built like 5-star luxury spas. We cater not only to the customers described

earlier, but also to women and couples alike! We train all of our staff to upgrade their skills in both theory and practicum, we invest in their financial growth, and teach them sales skills to build a profitable roster of clientele. We help them with their accounting, refer tax professionals, investment advisors, and more. We do joint promotional events and cross promotions with other like-minded businesses that have developed a community that encourages success all around. We participate regularly in the legal quest for decriminalized sex work, for stigma-based harm reduction, and for the legitimacy of the need for our business.

Much like a sexy night in on your husband's birthday where you want to spoil him with a sexy massage, affection, attention, and pleasure, we are able to deliver that to every customer. Which in turn reduces the pressure on RMT's. While it may be outside the box information for many to learn, erotic massage parlors have existed for hundreds of years! We took that stale, stagnant, in-the-shadows business model, and MUSE flipped it on its head and elevated it beyond your wildest, most luxurious, sexiest dreams!

There is also a huge stigma placed on customers of parlors, and the guys asking RMTs for "extras". The assumption is that they must all be creeps, weirdos, gross or lame. And I can say that in my 22





years in this business, I've encountered less than a dozen creeps, weirdos, gross or lame clients. The customers that visit are looking to be seen and heard. They are seeking attention and affection. Most are in marriages where they live like roommates and sleep in separate bedrooms. Most end up spending the bulk of their sessions talking, confiding, and seeking acceptance. There is a special candidness that occurs when you are stripped down. It's raw, it's real, and it's very much a deep human connection.

I learned some of life's most influential lessons from the wisdom customers shared with me. I'm sure many of you can relate to the way customers get to talking in a massage treatment. It gifted me the opportunity to learn vicariously from unlikely sources. It's absolutely amazing the journey a man travels in his life. We adults often say "if I knew then what I know now". Well, sex workers are given an exclusive insight into the things men are not speaking about at home, at the office, with the guys, and even with a therapist. Their insight and lived experience is priceless! And they so generously share that within our code of privacy and anonymity, like the number one rule of "Fight Club". It's far beyond just Rub and Tug. It's much more Connect and Express.

Some of the deepest, coolest, and funniest things happen in Massage parlors around the world! From new fetishes to requests you've never heard before, we get to relish and cultivate an environment of acceptance and normalize fantasy, without the shame

society often places. MUSE is a safe space for expression, innovation, and pleasure, with sensual massage as the foundation.

Some of these women also give a damn good massage!! Some are even trained by RMTs! That said, we come across injury and serious misfiring kinetic muscle function all the time, and often refer customers to seek out a qualified RMT for a rehabilitation plan from that old college football injury or that torn rotator cuff injury from their youth that still gives them trouble. Healing is far beyond the medical. And even mental. Whole healing has to include healthy sexual expression and function. We also help people with prostate issues and erectile dysfunction, sexual abuse trauma victims and mental blockages that interfere with their intimate sexual relationships. Even folks with special needs who have rich sexual desires, and we help find ways to execute them in unique ways, as the body does its job to repair and reroute its pleasure centers.

Stigmas be damned, our sector of the massage world is as much a service to society's overall well-being as your vital positions as RMTs. People need options. And when our worlds can come together to heal and help, we make for a better society.

So next time you find yourself in an uncomfortable braggadocious "accidental" display of a tent-pitched customer, hand them our business card and let them know that you know of just the place for them and all their desires. Tell them to say Emily sent them. Xoxo!



CASINO MASSAGE

The Perfect Side Hustle for Massage Therapists

BY KELLEY STEAD, LMT, PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID MORENO PHOTOGRAPHY

When you become a massage therapist, you immediately realize how many directions your career can go. Some gravitate towards spa life. Others pursue careers in chiropractic offices or working with athletes.

I was twenty-two when I graduated from massage school in the United States—completely broke, in debt, and without a car. I wanted to be a massage therapist because the profession was interesting to me—but I also needed to make money quickly.

So, I answered an ad for a casino massage therapist position. I'd never set foot in a casino before, but I knew there was money there. I had no idea at the time that the job would completely transform my life. It made me a strong, effective chair massage therapist. It helped me learn to be a self-starter, and manage my time well. And it gave me the financial freedom to build a life and travel—all while working three to four days a week.

Many massage therapists have no idea this niche industry of the massage world exists. And let me say now that it's certainly not

for everyone. But for massage therapists looking to make great money on their own schedule, it can be a fantastic side hustle, or full-time job.

Here's why:

Flexible Schedule

Casino hours vary depending on the city and state they're located in, but most are open late, if not 24/7. This makes it possible for massage therapists to choose a schedule that works around their daily lives. They can work late nights, weekends, as well as day shifts if they choose. As independent contractors, casino massage therapists can choose to work as many hours as they want. Some decide to make it their full-time career, while others use it as a side hustle to help fund their interests or private practices.

I always had an entrepreneurial spark, but with a normal 9-5 and a child, it would have been difficult to build a business and

still survive. Casino massage allowed me to work a few nights a week, keeping my days open for all the things I needed to get done during business hours. There was a tremendous amount of freedom in that, and I was able to start my own company dedicated to improving the lives of casino massage therapists and helping them create their own financial freedom.

Money

There is always money to be made in a casino. Most casino massage companies charge \$1.50-\$2.00 per minute for services, and give therapists either a 40/60 or 50/50 split. That averages to around \$48-\$60 per hour commission.

But where casino massage therapists can really profit is from their tips. Tipping in a casino is quite different from tipping in a traditional spa or mobile massage business. Poker and table game players can be extremely generous and it is not uncommon for them to tip far beyond the cost of the service itself- especially if they're winning at the table.

It's hard to place an average dollar amount on what casino massage therapists can make in a day. It varies greatly and is dependent on your skills as a therapist, the shifts you work, and who you happen to get as a client. Personally, I have made thousands of dollars in a single day. That's not every day, of course, but each time you walk into work there is the chance that a high roller or generous player can hit big, and reward you for your efforts.

To me, not having a cap on how much money I can bring in per week is electrifying and exciting. It's almost, dare I say, a gamble?

Travel Opportunities

There is a community of thriving massage therapists who make their living following the World Series of Poker and similar tournaments, traveling and working with multiple casino massage



companies across the United States and beyond. There are tournaments that stop in the Bahamas, Dominican Republic, and even Amsterdam and other European countries.

These traveling therapists spend their days soaking up the sights and sounds of new places while working and making great money.

Traveling therapists are required to maintain licensure in each state they work in, as well as abide by foreign rules and regulations. They are also responsible for their lodging during tournament events. It isn't an option for everyone, of course, but can be extremely rewarding for those who've caught the travel bug.

Or even those who just want a work-cation that pays for itself.

Safety

Casinos sometimes have the reputation of being seedy and unsafe for therapists. In reality, casino massage is very safe. Clients remain fully clothed during services and therapists have the right to refuse anyone they don't feel comfortable massaging.

All chair massages are performed in the open and under surveillance of cameras and casino security. Casinos are very strict when it comes to protecting their vendors and security will intervene at even the slightest hint of a problem.

Exciting Environment

There's always something to see in a casino. It's a completely different experience than being in a dimly lit room. I learned the casino games by watching my clients play, and it's fun to cheer them on and celebrate their wins with them. Casino people can be quite superstitious, so when they hit big, they often attribute it to the person massaging them, especially therapists who are upbeat and friendly.

In a casino there are always giant televisions playing sports games or poker tournaments. There's upbeat music playing through the speakers. And the people-watching is unmatched. For therapists that get bored easily, casino massage can be a refreshing new world full of fun and excitement.

Like any career, there are pros and cons. But for those who want to make a significant amount of money and enjoy being in a social, somewhat chaotic environment where anything is possible, casino massage can become the perfect career or side-hustle.





Why you get hurt in the massage room

BY MARK LISKEY

“Why didn’t they teach me how to take care of my body in school?”



T-bar Relaxed Hand

The stabbing pain in my upper-back seemed to be connected to the electrical feeling in my elbow and the constant tingling in my hands. The orthopedist diagnosed me with cervical radiculopathy, cubital tunnel syndrome and unstable left shoulder. Before I could tell him about my achy fingers, he said: If I were you, I’d find a new job.

It was practical advice, what I would expect a doctor to say, but here’s the thing: I had worked through aches and pains in the massage room before, why couldn’t I do it now? Granted, these were bigger issues than before, but what if I ran an “experiment” in my massage room where everything was on the table (no pun intended)? In other words, I wouldn’t assume what I knew about body mechanics was correct. Anything goes; winner takes all.

I went with the experiment. I gave myself a year to figure out how to massage without being in pain, and at the end of the day, I was able to do massage without hurting myself or triggering old problems.

I usually tell this story before I teach my body mechanic classes to help participants understand the rationale behind my classes. I’m telling you this story because if you have or are massaging in pain, there’s a reason why: The massage industry does not have your back.

Massage is Physical

Here are two facts about massage: It’s a physical job that stresses joints, and your income as a massage therapist is dependent on how many massages your body can handle in a day. That’s a recipe for pain and injury.

With a job so “body” dependent, it’s still alarming to me when massage therapists, after reading my book, [The Pain-Free Massage Therapist](#), ask me, “Why didn’t they teach me how to take care of my body in school?”

It’s a question I have asked massage teachers. Here are their answers: I would like to teach more body mechanics but I have to cover so much material I don’t have time to cover body mechanics thoroughly and I have to teach for passing the licensing exam.

Massage teachers are in a tough spot, right? Their hands are tied, and it’s not their fault that you didn’t walk out of massage school knowing how to take care of your body in the massage room. The blame goes to the massage industry.

The Massage Industry

By massage industry, I’m talking about massage schools, licensing boards, regulatory agencies, professional groups, massage businesses, massage product suppliers, massage CE providers and media outlets. These entities are connected to each other through relationships and are dependent on each other through transactions. That’s not a bad thing for the health of the massage industry, but not always a great thing for the health of the massage therapist.

As it pertains to this article, no entity that I know in the massage industry opposes teaching a massage therapist how to massage without being in pain. That said, no entity in the massage industry is rushing to the frontline to make the therapist’s physical health in the massage room the most important topic of 2023. Why? It’s not profitable enough, relationship-smart or transaction-wise.

Massage schools don’t fill seats by highlighting how physically demanding massage can be when they don’t have an answer to the body, wear-and-tear problem because they haven’t sunk time, money and resources into developing a program that mitigates on-the-job injuries and pain conditions.

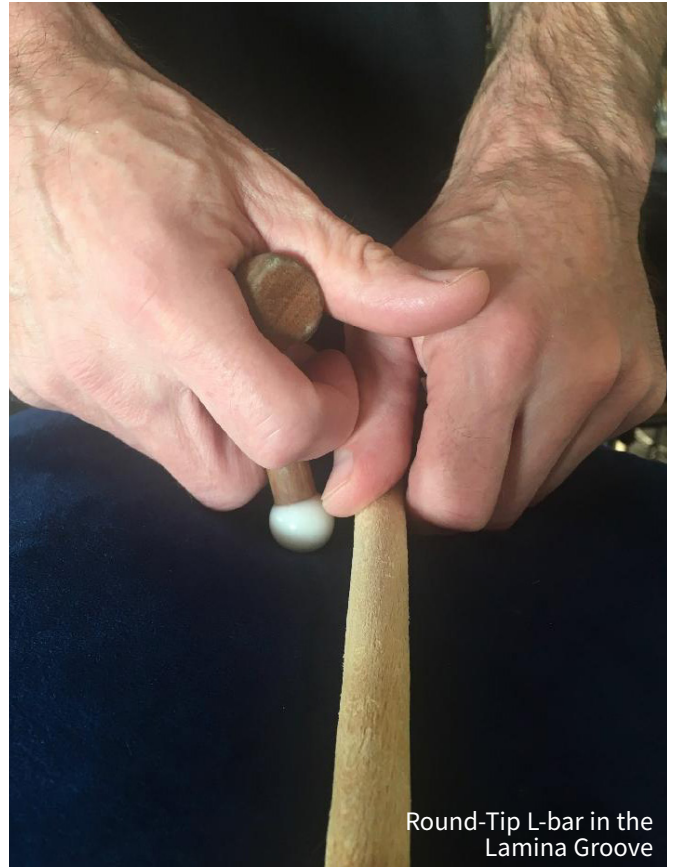
Professional groups stay funded or make money by straddling the line between looking out for the massage therapist and keeping massage employers, massage schools, sponsors, donors and advertisers happy. They’re not going to risk losing revenue by pushing massage schools or massage businesses to truly put the massage therapist first.

Media outlets publish articles to get views and sell subscriptions. An article like “How to Release Fascia Using Cupping” is hot. “How to Use Your Body Weight to Apply Force” is not. Also, media outlets have to be concerned if an article could upset an advertiser, which means the magazine may withhold information or not pursue a topic that is important to massage therapists but potentially disruptive to the massage industry. (Massage Therapy Media is an exception to the rule or you wouldn’t be reading this article.)

All this means that your physical well-being in the massage room is being addressed at a snail’s pace. Don’t take it personally. It’s business.



Resting Forerarm Trap Press



Round-Tip L-bar in the Lamina Groove

Look Out For Yourself

So, for now, until the massage industry changes, you have to look out for “you” in the massage room. Here’s what you do:

1. Trust yourself. You know when a technique is hurting you. Stop doing it and find a replacement that doesn’t hurt your body. This is easier said than done, especially when you think a technique is helping a client get out of pain or you’re entrenched in a methodology.

I am a certified neuromuscular massage (NMT) therapist. When NMT started to beat up my body, I continued to do it exactly as I was taught because I thought it was the only way I could get the job done.

But eventually I realized that massage was not like hip surgery where the surgeon had to do a specific task in a specific way to produce a specific outcome. For a relaxation or a pain relief effect, I discovered I had a lot of options.

2. Experiment. If you want to look out for your body in the massage room, you need to think about your body during the massage. I’m not saying to prioritize your body over the quality of the massage. I’m saying be aware of massage techniques and body mechanic strategies that are causing you pain. Once you are aware, you can experiment with making adjustments

By the way, the two, a good massage and a safe massage for your body, are not mutually exclusive. In fact, once I started to look out for my body in the massage room, I became more attentive to what strokes and techniques my clients liked and I was then able

to provide a massage that was even more customized than before. Here’s what you do to change the massage industry:

3. Buy courses and study modalities that have the massage-therapist’s body in mind.

Massage schools are not motivated to put our bodies first until market forces push them to do so. That said, we can start this process by demanding that modalities and CE courses are designed with massage therapists’ bodies in mind.

Don’t think: I am paying a course provider to teach me a new technique. Think: I am paying a course provider to teach me a new technique AND to NOT hurt my body. The provider should have or be able to create workarounds for any of their techniques that may cause you pain because of your body type, massage style or a pre-existing pain condition. Period.

Change From the Top Down

Ultimately, the massage industry is selling us what we are willing to accept. Right now, we accept the next shiny massage-technique because it will make us more money or help our clients feel better no matter the toll it takes on our bodies. But the reality is you don’t make more money and help more clients by doing less massage because your body hurts from doing techniques that were not designed with your body in mind.

So, buy classes that are body-friendly. To protect your body in the massage room, trust yourself to know when a technique causes you pain. Then experiment to figure out workarounds or to find substitutes. If you need more help, I’m [here](#).



The Philanthropist Therapist:

An Interview with Terra Nicolle

BY MASSAGE THERAPY MEDIA

We're speaking to therapists who do things that are very outside of the box and maybe things that other manual therapists might not think are possible. Terra Nicolle is a yoga therapist, a Registered Massage Therapist, Osteopathic Manual Practitioner, and Philanthropist. I had a chance to sit down with Terra to hear about her life as a therapist, educator, and philanthropist.



Tell me a little bit about what it is you do, and where, and some of the new projects you're working on.

Awesome. Thank you, Amanda. So, I think what I want foremost is for other therapists to realize that this is something that anyone can do; that I'm not special and that giving back is something that all of us do in some capacity. We just don't realize it. So, we all have a patient that we treat for free or a friend of a friend that we do work for that can't afford treatment, but that we see can benefit from the treatment. So even here we're always helping. I mean, I think that's part of being a healer and part of being a therapist is wanting to do more for others. I started a few years ago. I really felt like God laid it on my heart to go to other countries where people need help and need more and don't have the education that we have here to be able to give them an advantage or treatment that could simply change their lives that to us would be so small and so I started by going to Africa. I started just doing regular treatments. I really wasn't even sure what I would be treating when I was there, but I ended up working with a lot of pediatrics with cranial issues, club feet, brachial plexus injuries- all things that massage therapists work on all the time and I found that their education as therapists there was 30 years behind what we're learning here. In fact, our massage therapists know more than their medical personnel. And so, I started giving them back education and different ways of treating. Some of the things that they were doing were very old and not quite getting the results that they were looking for. In fact, in some instances, the treatment was worse than the injury that they had come in with. Then I came back here to Canada to get more education. We have great continuing education leaders in our industry. Cindy McNeely at Trimesters, Michelle (Francis-Smith), and all the pregnancy courses and Spinning Babies. I started taking all these extra courses and then again went back to share the new information that I gained and an opportunity to continue to treat and educate some of the workers there so that they were doing better practices with the population there. So, from there, I've started actually opening my own clinic so I came back and I really felt it laid on my heart to go to Roatan. And so, I went to Roatan and half of the country is affluent and expats and very touristy but the other half is very third world. And so, I started in the works to set up a free clinic there where I'm hoping eventually therapists like myself or educators or even just people that want to go and give back, would have an opportunity to go and give back there.

If you were a therapist or like you said anybody who wanted to give back and go to a country in Africa or another third world type of country, how do you get started? What did you do? Like, what are people Googling to figure out how to get started doing this work? I assume you don't just buy a plane ticket and show up.

No, I met this little lady who was the head of SIMs which is Serving in Missions. It was kind of crazy how that whole story happened and she asked me if I was interested in coming to Mukinge, a teaching hospital in Zambia to educate nurses on updated anatomy and maybe giving them some techniques or ways of treating people that wouldn't resort to surgery or involve medications because a lot of times they just don't have that. So, when I met Doreen, she set in motion for me to go to Mukinge. But I also had an opportunity to go and work with Doctors Without Borders. So, I would say that if that's what you want to do, search out those particular organizations- like anyone that's going and doing humanitarian work- they're always looking for people. You do not have to have any specific skill to be able to go as massage

therapists. We have a huge toolbox at our disposal for different techniques. For Roatan, I simply got a ticket and went there and started looking around. We hired a driver and asked him to take us to some of the clinics that were on the island and at that time I really didn't see a space that I was interested in. I came back here, ended up meeting a man at a picnic that lived in Roatan. He was a builder and he's Honduran and they had just moved here right pre-pandemic. He had all these contacts so he actually set me up with a real estate person back in Roatan who had a clinic space that was empty.

Wow, God really was telling you to go. You said you just bought a ticket. Had you known anyone from the island or had you been there before? What made you decide that was the country that you were going to set up shop?

No, we were actually just watching that vacation show with my kids. I'm trying to remember what the name of it is, but it's like trying to find an island home. So, we were watching that and they had on it all these different homes in these different islands and I was like Roatan's pretty nice. Like I love the fact that there is a reef around it. And so yeah, that's how it happened.

Amazing! You have a very busy practice here with a very large pediatric population that you treat. How do you balance the two if there are therapists who are really interested in doing this, but think how can I just walk away from my practice? How do you do it?

Yeah, so you don't have to walk away- I designate time. So, this year I designated just a month. So typically, I would go to Africa for a month. I'd be there for the month of August and my patients here just understand that I do this other work and I'll be gone for a month every year and typically one or two weeks at the beginning of the year. So, it's spreading it out a little bit and yeah, it's managing your time well- I work really hard when I am here. And so typically my practice is around six days a week and I have a very full schedule but I also have two other practitioners that work here and naturopath that's going to be starting at the end of this month. So really diversifying my practice, and making sure that I have other people that can support what I do as well, that can step in when I'm away for a short time. And if you didn't want to hire somebody and have other people working with you, it's making those connections within your community that you would refer to.

I'm sure your patients love that you do this work.

They do actually and my patients are my biggest supporters. We just got back from Roatan and we took a 50-pound bag of medical supplies that we gave to a clinic down there and a 50-pound bag of Donations for Orphans- clothing, diapers, toothbrushes, and socks for an orphanage that's down there and that's something that anyone can do. I didn't know that at the time and I simply contacted a clinic that was down there and an orphanage and said that I wanted to bring supplies and WestJet or Air Canada will allow you up to four 50 pound bags for free if they're humanitarian supplies and you just have a note from that clinic that they are medical supplies that they're waiting for. We have a huge influx of people that come into our practice that are dentists, nurses, or that have someone that was sick that they have a box of medical supplies that they don't need anymore and anyone can take these things down when they are on holiday. It's a small thing for us but in these countries that don't even have Amazon it makes a huge

difference and I would say that that's pretty much most of the Caribbean islands. They do not have Amazon or FedEx. So, taking a bag of supplies there when you're already going anyway, and you can leave it in the hotel lobby and they will come and pick it up. You don't even have to deliver it. So, yeah, I think it's something that we can all be doing.

That's amazing and aside from the supplies, which as you said anybody can do, one thing you mentioned at the beginning was educating medical staff because that's something that's super valuable. Since you yourself can't be there 12 months out of the year, when you go back to certain countries do you connect with some of the same clinics and staff and see how they're doing?

I do and I think that the most special gift that I'm thankful for is WhatsApp because it doesn't matter what country that you go to everybody has access to WhatsApp. Even if the internet connection isn't great, you can still connect back and check in on how things are going. So, yes, I go there and you do not have to be special to impart the wisdom that you have and show other people how things work. Then I can use WhatsApp to check in and just see how are things going. I have these dolls and so when they call me from Cozumel because they're interested in breast-feeding techniques, I'm just finishing up my lactation consultant, or something that's going on with the cranium or the latch, I can always use the doll and on WhatsApp, I can show them bring the knees in make circles make sure the arms can reach above the head and we can go through these things together. So, it's using what you have.

And why the drive Terra? Everything sounds amazing, and I know that everybody really does love that feeling of being able to help people. By the sounds of it you're really going above and beyond and making sure that you're checking in on people on your own time educating people through WhatsApp going back to specific countries. Why do you feel so compelled to do this?

I think the reason that I feel so driven to do this work is because here in Canada, we're lucky we have the opportunity to get continuing education credits to continue to learn in so many different fields and in a lot of these other countries the education there is just substandard and so even as massage therapists we have so much that we can offer to other countries just to help them get a little bit further and I just think you know, just because I was born here where things are easy. I really think that we should all be giving back to someone else and I could send money if I didn't have any skills to go do something. But because I do I feel like it's much more helpful. If I go and show people a better way to do something. So that's why I do it.

Do they welcome you with open arms? Do the medical professionals there really want to learn and are they really excited to hear what you have to say and learn new techniques and upgrade their skills?

Yeah, always. One thing that makes me feel really humble is that when I go there, they act like I have more answers than they do. They've had to learn how to do things without having any of the opportunities that we have with medicine and the most updated

tools and so I just I'm in awe of how far they've come with how little that they have and I think that if I can give them just the littlest bit to make what they're doing that much more effective, I feel honored. I think that probably because I go into it with that attitude and that I feel grateful as well that I have this opportunity, it makes for a good mix. People say here that our medical profession doesn't want to hear what my massage therapist has to say or they look down on my osteopath. To be honest even here in Canada, I haven't had that experience. I've had Physicians and other educators really interested in what we have to say and what we've learned and I think that a lot of it is our confidence in what we have to share, not in what we're sharing because medical professionals themselves here in Canada only have 20 hours of basic anatomy. In massage school alone we have over 200 hours of anatomy and then everything that we do is based on anatomy. Then we go to Osteo school where it's the next level of anatomy. So, I feel like even when I've talked with other medical professionals and I've explained something where I think what I might be saying is remedial, they're really interested and say can you expand on that? So, I think it's more in our mindset and thinking that we don't have that much to offer but I think that we just don't realize how valuable our education is and how much we can help by educating others and sharing our knowledge.

Talk to me about the clinic in Roatan. When is that set to open up? What are the plans and what is your role going to be specifically there? Are we losing you here in Canada? Are you leaving?

No, not at all. So, the clinic is already established. There's two there's the Clinica Esperanza and that's in Sandy Bay and then there's a clinic in the East End that is mostly young pregnant moms, which start at the average age of 14, which is unheard of here or maybe not but the average age of 14 and they're unwed mothers or orphan children. I'll be doing treatments in either one of those. Even if you just do general basic massage for pain, techniques for pregnant women, you can go there and show those midwives and lactation consultants how they can better help or facilitate helping the postpartum women there in pregnancy and postpartum. The other clinic I'll be doing more cranial work, latch-ing issues, and pelvic floor within our scope of practice. Maybe two weeks at each of the clinics when I go and that'll take over the work that I was doing in Africa.

How different is the way of life in some of these third world countries in the sense that does it make you feel like all of the problems we have are first world problems or do you realize that we are all just so stressed that everything's a problem?

Yeah, a bit of both. I think that when you go to these countries you realize that because they have so little they make do with what they have. They do seem a bit happier than we do here. There's more community because in the evenings everybody isn't rushing off to sit on their Netflix. People sit around and play cards and talk and you spend more time with the community. So, you actually form really close relationships really quickly and it's beautiful. So even in Africa, there's reserves, there are things to do and the country itself is beautiful. I know it sounds kind of silly, but we cango pump water for an afternoon. Makes you feel really good to be so needed and so accepted so yeah, like I said, it fills my cup as well when I go on these trips and If I was being totally honest,

I probably get more out of it than they do so. Yeah, it definitely makes my life here seem a lot smaller.

Is there any sadness and what I mean by that is you're working a lot with pediatrics and orphan children and probably dealing with patients who as you said don't have access to practitioners with the knowledge to deal with their conditions or with conditions that we wouldn't see here necessarily because we have more access. Is there ever a part of it that can really affect your mental health?

Yeah, absolutely. When you go there and you see that I think I talked about this before like something so simple as a five-cent polio vaccine here and their children still die from polio. So, when you go and you see how privileged we are to be here then some of the things there are hard to bear just because you know that the resolution to it could be so simple right? Or a lot of burn victims, especially in Africa because they heat everything by fire and so, the chances are higher of someone getting burned or scolded when there's always a pot of boiling water at home. Some of those things are really hard to take because here in Canada, we don't have those kind of issues because we have proper homes and they're heated properly. It's not like we have a fire going on inside of our homes. So those are very rare, but I think that yeah, when you realize that you can go and make a difference by even just taking some lavender oil maybe telling them not to put honey on everything. Maybe just a small bit of education is sometimes very helpful.

What does your family think about the missions? I assume they're very proud, but do they worry about you going to these places? Are they very supportive? Have any of your family ever gone with you?

No, nobody's ever gone with me, but yeah, I think that they're really proud. I don't think anybody's ever been worried about me. I mean yeah, it's been a good experience all the way around. My kids have done their own work. My youngest daughter has gone to Haiti and done Mission work and then my middle daughter actually went to Uganda and worked in an orphanage there.

What's next for you? Other than the clinic. Is that where you're planning to keep your focus for the next little while or you already thinking about other things that you can do to give back to the global Community?

Yeah, I think for right now, I really do just want to get Roatan started. My husband would like to travel around and check out some other islands. If we do that then I would just contact them in advance to see what clinics are there and what the availability is to go and do some work there. I think that all of us think that you have to have something special to take there. But even if I contact them and say I can give one day of education and if there's anyone in your clinic that would like to learn some updated things on lactation consulting or some updated things on pregnancy or postpartum or even if it wasn't related to that and I wanted to go there and show people how to alleviate neck pain; if you contact places like this in advance and say hey, I'm going to be here this week. I was just wondering if any one of those days any of the therapists that work in your clinic would like some updated techniques?

Even if I just graduated from school, I would be more than happy to share because like I said in these particular places or countries, Jamaica, Mexico, they don't have the most updated information. So, they're more than happy to have someone come in and even if you're a brand new graduate, you're considered to be a bit of a celebrity in these countries because you want to come and share what you've just learned so that they have a more updated practice. They don't get a certificate at the end of it, but they get an ability to be able to help people better than they were before. So how rewarding would that be?

Do you encourage your students here in Canada? Because you are an educator, do you talk about this work that you do when you're teaching your classes? Do you encourage students to look into going to other countries and bringing their knowledge and expertise?

Yeah. I always do. As educators, I think that we can take our gifts anywhere we go. I mean as a massage therapist, we could go and work on a cruise boat and you could get a month free on a cruise boat. All you have to do is offer your services. I think people need to be a little bit more creative with the skills that they have. I remember at the beginning of my fitness instructor career, I had a girlfriend that was hiring instructors to go work at Resorts. All you had to do was pay for your plane ticket and your partners. So, if you want to take someone with you, all you had to do is pay for the plane tickets for both of you and everything else was covered. You're at an all-inclusive vacation for a week and you teach fitness daily. You were going to work out anyhow, but now you get a free holiday out of it plus you meet other people that love the same things that you love so you can hang out with them afterwards. It was awesome. So, I started realizing as a massage therapist a lot of these resorts do the exact same thing. They're more than happy to have a massage therapist come be there for two weeks. And you could say what is the value? Like what would it cost me to make this worth my time? Two massages a day or sharing some education? I mean, I think as people we need to get a little bit more creative with the skills that we have and there's a barter system that could end up, benefiting you as well as them. I think we limit ourselves in thinking that everything has to have a monetary value when really, it's "what is it worth for me?" I think that hopefully whenever I teach my trainings, I always tell all the people that do it like how much they could be using these skills not just to benefit others, but also to benefit themselves. There are other things that we could be doing.

Terra, you imparted a lot of wisdom tonight. If you had to leave massage therapists, Osteopathic manual practitioners, yoga instructors, fitness trainers, or anybody in this manual therapy realm, what would be your advice to them?

Yeah. It's to realize that you've been given a gift. It's remembering that if you just gather all that information up and keep it within yourself and fill your practice because we can all do that, we're not benefiting the people that were trying to help and heal. But by taking that education and information that we've gathered and even just getting together with other therapists and sharing it we enrich the world around us. I think that I would say in whatever realm you're in, mentoring is so important and giving back fills your cup as well.

MASSAGE THERAPY FOR KIDS

Why I Work the Way I Do

BY SARAH KING





Massage Therapy is so much more than just effleurage and kneading variations. Here's why I work the way I do. As some people know I work with children and youth, many of whom struggle with participation. Children naturally want to participate. We all, even kids, understand the importance of moving our bodies to individual ability. I've observed 3 basic opportunities for kids to remain excited about participation or to be discouraged away from it. I'll share these observations and the role massage therapists can play in keeping kids in the participating zone. It's important to understand that when I say moving and participating it is 100%, with the understanding that participation looks very different for individual kids. And that is exactly my point. This article is not meant to include every possible scenario.

The first opportunity is the playground. Children have energy to burn, and recess is the opportunity to exhaust the wiggles and refocus the brain. If a child struggles with physical activity because of a diagnosed neuromuscular condition, their own physical discomfort, or other health issues, other children are not likely to slow their roll. It makes sense. On a sports field the kids who are good will play more and the kids who struggle can end up on the side and may continue to struggle. A kid who struggles climbing is less likely to climb in front of their friends. If their friends are running and a struggling child can't keep up, they are unlikely to continue to run. Additionally, some kids need assistance figuring out basic rules, and movements involved in play. Physical activity with friends might be difficult to keep up with and children find other less active things to do. The child may become more isolated on breaks if they can't find other kids in the same boat. If this happens their opportunities to move their body diminishes which leads to more difficulty with physical activity.

but can be difficult and complex for children with motor planning conditions or with speech and language conditions who may struggle with exercises with multiple steps or instructions. These are great exercises for some kids, but not all, unless individual adaptation is available. You might ask, don't children receive accommodations if they need it? Yes of course. However, even if every child who needed an accommodation got one, it's difficult for teachers to create a meaningful alternative for an exercise program for several kids in the same class or to guide a child through the alternative one to one in larger groups. Remember we are not talking about tiny adults who can just adapt for themselves. Additionally, an accommodation requires a formal request based on medical documentation and takes time. Some families have no idea why their child is struggling and may not have a diagnosis. Kids compare themselves to their peers and the way we have set up gym creates a situation where children who struggle for whatever reason are faced everyday with the reality that they are not at the same level as their peers and can become self-conscious as a result. Kids who have an accommodation may avoid using it, so they don't stand out. There are ways of including the usual exercises, adapting, and adding new ones that create a greater environment of adaptation and inclusivity, allowing kids who excel to continue to do so and kids who struggle to stay involved and improve at their own pace. If kids have tried the playground and gym is discouraging, they might still try another activity.

In my experience kids often still show a level of enthusiasm toward a specific thing they want to try, martial arts, swimming, or gymnastics for example. Most programs start off as fun and fitness, with everyone moving at their own pace. Coaches are all

The most profound things children ever say to me is not that the massage felt good, although that is nice to hear, it was that I answered questions that they had been wondering about and that I helped them better understand their body.

Even when recess is a challenge there is still a chance for fun and fitness within individual abilities.

Children I work with try hard to fit in and to keep up, sometimes to the point of exhaustion, discomfort and even pain. So, the next opportunity (gym class) for them to find fun in movement can either build confidence or be another steppingstone away from it. A typical gym class may include what appear to be individual activities, like running, yoga, and conditioning, but when done as an entire class, they shine the same spotlight on individual differences and ability gaps. In the best case these activities are not easy for all children to keep up with, in the worst case they are inappropriate for them altogether. Let's look at a couple of activities. Running as a group for a child who is uncomfortable in their body, or children with any number of neuromuscular conditions simply leaves some kids trailing behind. Common in classes for younger kids, bear walk, has the child folded in half and compresses the abdominal contents up and makes it just a little more uncomfortable to breathe for kids with more abdominal mass. It's also not great for kids with neuromuscular conditions that cause increased tone or spasticity in the posterior thigh and leg or children with balance issues. Yoga is wonderful

about the positive vibe and the kid has a wonderful time, builds confidence, and becomes more physically motivated. Fantastic. Inevitably though as the program progresses, there are very few sports or clubs, individual or otherwise where things don't start to become more demanding, and more intense. As kids move up levels the coaches become more about proper technique and higher intensity levels of training. As the program becomes more intense their confidence may take another hit and they may eventually drop out of yet another physical program. Remember kids are not tiny adults. Their brains and bodies, especially those kids that struggle physically, have just found relief in the fact that they found a program that they feel more comfortable in and then it changes. Luckily, there are more programs that are getting better at being more adaptive and inclusive. As programs do this, more kids will be in the same class and kids will have peers with a variety of abilities and therefore will be more likely to continue.

So where do I think a Massage Therapist, knowledgeable in these matters, fit in? First, we must ask ourselves as individuals with different knowledge and skill sets, "do I have enough knowledge to have a role here?" I have a good understanding of movement patterns, and concepts related to therapeutic exercise



(balance, coordination, proprioception, flexibility, strength, vestibular, mobility, motor planning, sensory processing – I’m sure I’m forgetting things). I also have an understanding of the impact of speech and language on following instructions, as well as inclusion, and adaptation. For the therapists who are comfortable with these concepts here’s what we can do. First be a support. Create a truly non-judgemental environment, for your client and parents to share their concerns. Educate your client on how to accommodate for themselves and why it’s important to do so. Educate their teachers, coaches, and parents on how to accommodate for the child and why it’s important. Assess to find out what the biggest challenges are, determine if they are things that you can help improve and include them in a massage or a therapeutic exercise program. Most importantly help the clients you work with be as comfortable in their body as possible. We can be an advocate, we can educate, we can work on the body, and with the body to improve skills and movements where possible

and be a sensory tool that helps a child find comfort, confidence and be more present in their body and individual abilities. I will leave off with this thought. The most profound things children ever say to me is not that the massage felt good, although that is nice to hear, it was that I answered questions that they had been wondering about and that I helped them better understand their body. Do I always include therapeutic exercise? Definitely not. Do I work with kids who have no physical struggles? Yes of course. My point is simply that massage is far more than kneading and effleurage and as a profession we have the opportunity to have a profound impact on our client’s physical and mental wellbeing. Whether you work with kids or adults, non judgemental communication and education can go a long way in helping our clients feel better in their own unique bodies and possibly more likely to engage in movement and activities of daily living on the level that best suites their needs and abilities.



The Many Benefits of Massage Competition

BY VICKI S. WINSTON, BHS, LMT

“I looked at my competitors and I thought that, if they could do it, I could do it.”

-Tommy Hillfiger

Competition is an important consideration for any industry, and, whether we are ready to accept it or not, the massage industry is no exception. Massage competitions provide a unique opportunity for massage therapists to demonstrate their skills and build their professional identity. By competing, massage therapists can expand their knowledge, challenge themselves, and improve their services. In this article, we'll explore the many benefits of massage competition and how it can positively impact the massage industry as a whole.

Historically, the practice of massage has been something that has been hidden and private, and as solitary practitioners in secluded environments, we don't get to see each other in the usual sense of exhibition. We know that massage is a dynamic, sometimes life changing, experience for the recipient. What we don't take into consideration is that in the right context, it can also be a dynamic experience for the spectator. Professional content creators like Ian Harvey known online as “The Massage Sloth” and the “Rebel Massage” therapist Allison Denney, have shown this to be true. When we watch others perform even the most basic and fundamental massage strokes, we have a visual interpretation of a sensory experience; an important instructional component for every beginning massage student.

Events like the American Massage Championship can be an incredibly powerful tool for encouraging creativity and innovation. By celebrating the excellence and unique qualities of participants, rewarding and acknowledging important contributions, and engendering pride and excitement in the practice of massage, massage competitions can inspire and motivate future leaders to take risks and push boundaries. It is a great way to showcase the best of what the massage industry has to offer, and to foster an environment that encourages innovation and creativity. By recognizing exceptional work, it acknowledges those involved and serves as an example of excellence for others to strive for. Not only does it provide an incentive to perform better, but it encourages practitioners to stay on top of new developments in the industry.

When I mention that my teaching facility will be hosting our state's inaugural state massage championship, the question most often asked is “how can you judge a massage?” Like a master tailor, great massage therapists don't just treat human bodies, they interpret the body with precision and tailor the massage to the human on their table. Measurable details like comfort, appropriate pressure, temperature, and draping as well as the awareness and recognition of non-verbal cues are easily reported by the receiver. Body mechanics, grace, and artistry are all judged according to guidelines provided by event organizers. Just like art, the appreciation of massage is subjective and artistry and beauty inherent in the work that therapists showcase is rewarded.

Critics of competitive massage regularly remark how championship events “degrade” the profession. If we view these comments through the lens of local competition for consumer dollars, it may

seem to make economic sense to instinctively protect one's professional territory by dissuading peers from participating in public displays. However, the value of a championship is not in the potential market share for participating therapists. It is that it allows people to learn from each other and to give recognition to those who truly excel in the craft of massage. In addition, it offers incentives to therapists to learn and master new skills and to bring those skills back to their clients. For the public it helps to bring attention to the field and to raise the standard of massage education. Mike Hinkle, the founder of the World Massage Festival says “I have found no better way to improve public awareness about massage than competition massage.” Mike notes that because the professional organizations haven't been able to produce a coherent message that both promotes and protects licensed professionals, that competitions like the American Massage Championship are “here to stay.”

Massage competition can be a great way to promote professional development in the massage industry. Not only does it provide a platform for massage professionals to showcase their skills and knowledge, it also offers an opportunity to see how others practice within the same field. With the inclusion of participants from every culture, one of the main benefits of massage competition is that it can help reduce the incidence of cultural appropriation by western therapists of eastern modalities. When we have the chance to witness practitioners of these modalities in their own elements, we can better understand and appreciate the original context and technique. It can also help us to differentiate between interpretations of the work of other massage professionals, and original content created by the massage practitioner.

By attending massage competitions, practitioners can gain insight into new practices, techniques, and treatments that can help enhance their skill sets. Furthermore, it provides them with an opportunity to connect with and learn from more experienced practitioners in their field, thus promoting further professional development. This can help therapists stay up-to-date on industry trends, regulations, and methods. Ultimately, massage competition promotes professional development within the massage industry, which leads to better services for clients, and more opportunities for practitioners.

Competitive massage used as a public platform allows therapists from around the world to regain ownership of the legacies of their own cultural healing traditions and allows every massage therapist an opportunity to reflect on and reclaim the narrative of who they are and what they do. Furthermore, it has the potential to enhance the legitimacy of massage as a healthcare profession and sets apart those who take it seriously as a form of healing art. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, by encouraging community and the spirit of open collaboration, it serves to connect massage professionals to each other and to the wider healthcare community. This can only help the massage industry grow and become more accepted as an integral part of healthcare.



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