

# Touching Connection

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

## Let's Talk

### Communicating with Your Massage Therapist

Sharron Leonard

People get massages for a variety of reasons. Perhaps you're seeking stress relief from the weekly work commute or your wanting to cleanse your body of toxins. Or maybe massage is helping you recover from a sports injury or surgery. Whatever your reasons, it's absolutely important that you explicitly communicate to your therapist the reason you made the appointment. Otherwise you run the risk of not getting what you want.

In addition to explaining any wellness requirement, you also need to clarify your comfort needs during the session so that you feel completely at ease. Most practitioners work to create an appropriate environment with elements

### The Body

Sandy Anderson, owner of Relaxing Moments Massage in Reno, Nevada, asks at the beginning of each appointment, "What is the focus of our session today?" -- whether it's the client's first or 21st appointment with her. The therapist needs to know your wellness context. Even if she has your health history, circumstances -- and bodies -- are always changing. Perhaps you were traveling for the last two months spending significant time in cramped seats on airplanes. Maybe you're training for a marathon race, logging numerous miles each week. Or, a more likely scenario, you're stressed and feeling emotionally tapped.



Communicating with your massage therapist is always important, but especially for new clients.

such as the temperature, music, aromatherapy, and table setting. But if anything makes you uncomfortable, feel free -- or rather, feel responsible -- to say as much. Your therapist is as interested as you are in making sure you get what you want from the massage, and building a communicative partnership is key. Remember, communication is a two-way street.

Furthermore, it's important she or he knows about your massage preferences that just make your massage more pleasurable, such as getting extra work on your feet or ending the session with a face massage. Perhaps it's important to you to have the therapist "stay connected" by keeping her hands on you

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*A man's health  
can be judged  
by which he  
takes two at a  
time -- pills or  
stairs.*

-Joan Welsh

#### Office Hours and Contact

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rather than, for example, going from your feet to your shoulders. By simply letting her or him know of any such information can vastly improve your session.

## The Setting

"I have designed my treatment room to offer a basic comfort level based on my professional experience," Anderson says. "But I need the client to tell me if something is not to her liking. For example, I have provided a small fountain that I thought provided soothing background sounds, but two of my clients have requested that it be turned off because it made them feel as though they needed to run to the restroom."

One important amenity issue that should be discussed by the client and the therapist is massage-table comfort. "I use a heated table covered with a sheet and a blanket because as the active therapist I need the room temperature lower than what is comfortable for the client," Anderson says. "Then I ask the client what adjustments she might want me to make." Even if your therapist doesn't specifically ask about the temperature, background sounds, aromas or whatever other subtle amenities in the room, if there's something that's making your massage less than great, be sure to discuss it with your practitioner.

## The Conversation

Conversation can sometimes be a point of contention. Because some clients like to talk during a session while others prefer silence, Anderson believes it's up to the client to dictate this aspect. She does not inhibit talking nor does she initiate conversation if the client is silent. If you want to tactfully make certain your therapist is not overly conversational, it is appropriate to say something like, "You will find that I am not very talkative. I just like to totally relax during this time." While your practitioner may communicate aspects of the massage, don't necessarily take this for her trying to make conversation.

Angie Parris-Raney, owner of Good Health Massage Therapy in Littleton, Colo., believes it's very important for the therapist to explain her actions so the client is not surprised. "Whether I'm

easing a first-time massage client's apprehension by explaining I will only be uncovering one part of the body at a time or I'm doing a rehabilitation treatment for injury, illness or surgery, I have learned from experience the client wants detailed information on what is going to happen," Parris-Raney says. "It is also helpful if she tells me how she feels about what I am doing. Is the stroke too deep or too light? Does she want me to use a slower or faster pace?" If you are unclear about an expectation or a procedure, even if it is something as simple as, "Where is the safest place to put my jewelry?" feel free to ask.

Massage client Andrea Scott explains her frustration with one massage session where she wishes she'd been more vocal. "I like deep tissue massage, and the practitioner was giving me a very light Swedish massage," she says. "I just didn't

feel like I was getting anything out of it and found myself looking forward to the session just being over. For some reason, I thought it would be rude to say anything, but in retrospect, I'm sure she would've appreciated it." Instead, notes Scott, she left disappointed and the massage therapist never had a chance to address the issue.

Your goal as the client is to get what you are specifically seeking in each session. Your practitioner wants the experience to meet your expectations and will appreciate you verbalizing your wellness requirements and personal comfort needs. Your massage therapist is your partner for healthy living, but you need to speak up.



**A massage will be much more beneficial if you let your practitioner know what you need.**

# What Is Reiki?

## Understanding Energy Work

A type of energy bodywork, reiki (pronounced ray-key) relies on the ancient belief in the life force energy, referred to as chi, that flows through all things. This life force runs throughout pathways in the body called meridians, nourishing organs and cells and supporting vital functions. When this energy is disrupted by negative thoughts, feelings or actions, illness and disease result. A reiki practitioner's hands hover just above a person's body, sensing the affected areas and infusing them with positive flow. This raises the energetic vibration and breaks up the negativity to heal, clear and restore the natural flow of the life force. The reiki practitioner, trained to access and serve as a channel for the life energy, places his hands on or just above the client's body and uses a passive touch that some clients experience with warmth or tingling. The hands remain in position for 3-5 minutes, alternately covering 10-12 positions over the body.

Thought to be Tibetan Buddhist in origin, the practice of reiki is comprised

of three levels of training. Through this training, the practitioner learns how to access energy flow through the hands to heal. Completion of the third and highest level of training results in the title of reiki master. Reiki is used to accelerate healing, assist the body in cleansing toxins, balance the flow of subtle energy by releasing blockages, and help the client contact the healer within.

According to [www.reiki.org](http://www.reiki.org), reiki is beginning to gain acceptance as a meaningful and cost-effective way to improve patient care in hospitals and clinics across America. In an interview on the website, Dr. David Guillion, an oncologist at Marin General Hospital in California, says, "I feel we need to do whatever is in our power to help the patient. We provide state of the art medicine in our office, but healing is a multidimensional process. I endorse the idea that there is a potential healing that can take place utilizing energy." For more information, consult your bodywork practitioner.



**Reiki balances subtle but vital energy.**

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# High Time for Tea

## Discover the Healing Properties of Taking Tea

The health research is enough to make you forego the latte for strong brewed tea instead. Name your color -- black, white, green, even red -- teas are packed with disease-preventing antioxidants (more than some fruits and vegetables) and contain vitamins, minerals, and at least half the caffeine of coffee.

Fortified with free radical-fighting polyphenols, tea drinkers have a reduced risk of many different cancers, in particular stomach, colorectal, and even skin cancer. Tea drinkers also have a lower risk of heart disease, stroke, and high cholesterol. Containing anti-inflammatory and arthritis-preventing properties, tea also helps stimulate the immune system and protect the liver against toxins.

But you have to drink up. Most research points to five or so cups of brewed tea each day to reap the health benefits. Decaf tea loses some but not much of its health punch, due to extra processing.

All traditional tea -- white, green, oolong, and black -- is derived from the leaves of an evergreen tree called the *Camellia sinensis*, and all contain the health-promoting polyphenols. White tea is made from young tea leaves, dried in the sun without fermentation or processing. Green tea is dried with hot air after picking, so it retains its color but is not fermented. Oolong tea, sometimes referred to as "brown" tea, is fermented but not processed to the point of black tea. Black tea, on the other hand, is fully fermented, which

accounts for the color of the leaves and its stronger flavor.

Rooibos, or red tea, is naturally caffeine-free and from the *Aspalathus linearis*, a shrub that grows only at high altitude near Cape of Good Hope in South Africa.

Herbal teas are made from a variety of plants, roots, bark, seeds, and flowers and are technically herbal infusions rather than tea. Though they don't contain the same antioxidants and haven't received the same research-based accolades as traditional tea, the herbs in these infusions have certain healing properties that have been used for centuries to treat many common health issues.

*Kindness in  
words creates  
confidence.  
Kindness in  
thinking creates  
profoundness.  
Kindness in  
giving creates  
love.*

-Lao-Tzu

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