

## Four-Legged Clients

... and the bodyworkers who care for them

Rebecca Jones

Most bodywork clients appreciate the serenity of a darkened room, with soothing music playing quietly in the background and a touch of scented oil in the air. Then, there are Kathi Soukup's clients.

Like a growing number of massage therapists and bodyworkers, Soukup has become a family practitioner in the broadest sense of the term. She began her career working on horses and later learned to work on humans. Now, she's just as comfortable providing massage and acupressure to four-legged family members as two-legged ones.

"I've been in a veterinarian's office with a massage table set up in the middle and

people, their horses, and their dogs."

Denise Theobald, who has a massage practice in suburban Chicago, went the opposite route. Ten years into her (human) massage career, she thought she was approaching burnout. About the same time, one of her three dogs began limping, and a light bulb went on.

"I'm surprised it took me that long to think of it," Theobald says. "I always wanted to work with animals, but bodywork was my life. It just made sense that I would take everything that I learned in the human world and apply it to cats and dogs."

For the next 14 years, Theobald's human

*A smile is a  
curve that sets  
everything  
straight*



Providing therapeutic touch to a canine client.

a dozen dogs barking in the background," says Soukup, a massage therapist in Freeport, Illinois, who also plies her trade in barns, tack rooms, and anywhere else her clients call home. "I just try to find a level spot to work."

As a result, her clientele are as diverse as the venues in which she practices. "I have the trifecta," she says. "I work on

clientele filled the bulk of her time, but she made more and more house calls to see animal clients. "While I was at the house for the animal, the owner would ask, 'While you're here, could you work on my wife?'" In 2010, Theobald closed her human practice and opened Canine Massage Chicago.

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### Office Hours and Contact

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"I'd say 70-80 percent of the dogs I work on are on a mat on the floor," Theobald says. "But if a smaller dog is comfortable up on the table, I use sheets and change them, just like with humans." Plus, if a human wants a massage, she'll oblige. "People typically don't come here looking to get a massage for themselves, but they know I'm licensed and qualified to give human massages. There's just some dog hair in the room."

#### LEARNING THE RIGHT TECHNIQUES

Such blended animal-human practices are familiar to animal acupressure pioneer Amy Snow. Snow and her partner Nancy Zidonis are cofounders of Tallgrass Animal Acupressure Institute in Castle Pines, Colorado, and the authors of eight textbooks on animal acupressure. Snow estimates about one-third of the roughly 300 graduates of the Tallgrass program now have blended practices.

"We have quite a few licensed massage therapists in our program," says Snow, who originally trained in Chinese medicine nearly 40 years ago and teamed with Zidonis 15 years ago. "They come because they want to expand to serve the whole family, not just people and not just horses."

Tallgrass has lately begun promoting tui na, an ancient form of Chinese acupressure massage, as especially appropriate for animals. Snow says animals are highly responsive to the tui na techniques of "dredging," or clearing the meridians through grasping, holding, kneading, pressing, pounding, pushing, rolling, rubbing, and other manual manipulations.

Snow has worked on everything from cats and dogs to ferrets, minks, and rabbits, and Zidonis has worked on a variety of larger animals, including goats and sheep. "She's helped deliver baby goats by using acupressure points to help the contractions," Snow says. "It's amazing how receptive any animal is when they're not feeling good."

Certain animals are well-suited for different kinds of bodywork. For example, Snow finds that cats, who may not enjoy massage as much as dogs or horses, especially enjoy tui na. "I find cats and horses to be the most

energetically connected animals," she says. "They have personalities. Some will like one thing and not another. You have to use your educated intuition."

#### REACHING ALL CLIENTS

Therapists experienced in both animal and human massage and bodywork techniques say they're amazed at how often pets and their owners seem to suffer from the same maladies. It's usually not coincidence.

"It is pretty funny how they mirror each other," Theobald says. "Many times, if you have an active dog coming in for a sports massage, the owners are fit and active themselves."

"With horse and rider teams, if the human has a stiff neck, the horse may develop a stiff neck as well," Soukup says. "When we ride them and we're not in balance, we may cause them to be out

of balance." Sympathy pains are also common. "I see more emotional things with dogs. Dogs live in the house with humans, and they pick up on those things, like anxiety and grief, which can manifest in physical issues like allergies."

It's clear that both humans and animals can benefit from receiving bodywork, and these practitioners are proof that bodyworkers, through working with both humans and animals, can benefit, too.

*Rebecca Jones is a freelance writer who lives and writes in Denver, Colorado. This article originally appeared in the July/August 2013 issue of Massage Bodywork magazine.*



Horses may develop similar ailments as their owners.



# Afternoon Essential Oils

Jeanne Rose

It's easy to enjoy the benefits of aromatherapy, even when you're not in the therapy room. Here are some ways to incorporate facets of aromatherapy into your daily routine, and even into your lunchtime!

Consider having a protein-filled lunch of 4 ounces of chicken breast mixed with salad. Make sure your salad includes at least six red and green items combined, such as cucumber, lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, bell peppers, and radishes. Add chopped basil, sage, or sweet marjoram. Make a simple dressing of olive oil and lemon juice. Add culinary essential oils such as dill weed and black pepper. Have a glass of aromatic iced herbal tea, and add to it 1 teaspoon of melissa hydrosol. This is tasty and encourages deep thinking and relaxation. If, however, you need to continue your workday, then add 1 teaspoon of rosemary hydrosol to your lunchtime iced tea.

Why not take a five-minute scented breather for an afternoon break. The

aromatic properties of plants are effective tonics and energizers. Dabbing the temples with essential oils or spraying the nape of the neck with hydrosols of rosemary or peppermint is a wonderful way to implement the potent effects of these distilled plant materials. You can also use a mixture of distilled water with essential oils of peppermint, sage, and basil dissolved in alcohol (10 drops essential oil, 20 drops alcohol, and a half-ounce of water). Basil and peppermint herb, and their essential oils, have been used for centuries as a mental stimulant.

Complete your afternoon break by lying down for 3-5 minutes with a couple of slices of fresh cucumber on the eyes. Cucumber contains enzymes that help soften the skin. If the day's work has brought on a headache, a drop of rosemary oil to the temples or around the ears works wonders.

Jeanne Rose has been teaching and researching natural remedies for 30 years, beginning with her

first book, *Herbs Things*.



**Find out which essential oil works best for you.**

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## Handwashing for Your Health

### HANDWASHING FOR YOUR HEALTH

You know that washing your hands is important, but studies suggest that how you wash your hands is even more important. Washing frequently and thoroughly can help keep you, and the people you come in contact with, healthier.

### STAY CLEAN, STAY HEALTHY

Researchers in Denmark conducted a study in which students at one school were required to wash their hands three times a day. According to the study, which was published in the American Journal of Infection Control (August 2011), the children that learned new habits significantly reduced their amount of absences due to illness.

### HAND SANITIZERS VS. SOAP?

A study by the American College of

Preventive Medicine showed that alcohol-based hand sanitizers are less effective than soap at preventing outbreaks of norovirus in long-term care facilities. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers clean the skin by killing some bacteria, diseases, and germs on the skin's surface, but they don't actually remove dirt.

The CDC recommends using these sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol if soap and clean, running water are not available. Here is some more hand-washing advice from the CDC:

### WHEN SHOULD YOU WASH YOUR HANDS?

- Before, during, and after preparing food and before eating
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut

- After using the toilet or changing diapers
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal or animal waste
- After touching garbage

### WHAT IS THE RIGHT WAY TO WASH YOUR HANDS?

- Wet your hands with clean, running water and apply soap.
- Rub your hands together to make lather, then scrub the entire hand.
- Don't forget the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- Continue for at least 20 seconds.
- Rinse your hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air-dry them.

*A good laugh  
recharges your  
battery*

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