

# Releaf Massage Therapy

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

## How Does Massage Therapy Work?

### The Anatomy of Happiness

Douglas Nelson

*This article is from the Winter 2012 issue of Body Sense.*

As I greeted Craig in the waiting room, the radiant smile on his face told me we were making good progress on his shoulder pain.

"My shoulder is so much better," he remarked as he entered my treatment room. "I hardly think about it anymore." As a massage therapist who specializes in dealing with specific muscular issues, this is exactly what I hope to hear from the people I serve.

"I must say that the educational process has been just as valuable as the hands-on work. It has given me a greater

treatment is the effect on my mood. When I leave your office and go back to work, I seem to function much more efficiently; I get way more stuff done than usual. Mostly, I am in a much better mood, much happier, and more positive about the world. I have really enjoyed understanding how massage helped my shoulder, but now I'd like to understand how massage affects my mood."

Ready to accept the challenge, I jumped in.

"Here is one reasonable explanation based on emerging neuroscience. For many decades, the prevailing wisdom was that emotions are experienced in the

*"Take care of your body. It's the only place you have to live."*

-Jim Rohn



#### Why do you feel so good after a massage?

understanding of my own body, what to do, and maybe more importantly, what not to do. I have a better sense of what was happening to my shoulder and why. This whole process is so interesting and educational.

"I came to see you for help with my shoulder," he continued, "but one of the most striking benefits of my massage

mind and, as a result, those powerful emotions then affect our body. For example, when someone offends us, we have the emotional experience of anger. Shortly thereafter, we experience physical symptoms of anger, such as increased muscle tension, constricted breathing, and an increased heart rate.

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#### Office Hours and Contact

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On the other hand, powerful positive emotions like joy and happiness also have corresponding physical effects. Our emotions and thoughts have physical consequences. As it turns out, however, the new scientific understanding reveals that these mind-body experiences are at least bi-directional, if not completely the other way around."

"I'm a little lost," he said. "What do you mean by the other way around?"

"The emerging science is providing some really good evidence that the physical sensation can lead to the emotion, instead of the emotion manifesting as a physical experience."

"Wow, that seems completely backward!" he exclaimed.

"Your mind is always trying to make sense of what the body experiences. The brain needs a reason for what it experiences; we interpret meaning so we know how to respond appropriately. I am sure you can remember being really tense some morning, feeling completely out of sorts. If someone asked you why, you probably couldn't point to any specific offense as the reason. Throughout the morning, however, little things that would normally go unnoticed now really bothered you. You looked for things that were wrong to confirm that the tension you were feeling was perfectly appropriate for the terrible mood you were in. In essence, you created a viable emotional reason to explain your tense physical state."

"I assume that the reverse is also true, correct?" Craig interjected. "A better physical state should have a positive effect on emotions."

"Exactly. This might indeed explain what you experience after a massage. You leave my office with a very different physiology than when you arrived. The optimization of muscle function after massage will be experienced as efficient and effortless movement. The muscle tension in your shoulders is drastically reduced. Your breathing is slower and there is a heightened sense of awareness. Think about the emotional correlate your brain must then assign to this new stream of physical information. When do you normally feel such lack of tension, such lightness and freedom?"

"When I am extremely relaxed, happy, and contented; when the world seems like a wonderful place," he responded.

"The experience of physical ease is then interpreted by the brain as being a sign of emotional ease. Relaxation of the body is also relaxation of the mind, as evidenced by the fact that the same class of drugs (benzodiazepines) given as muscle relaxants is also used in the treatment of anxiety disorders. Furthermore, when you return to work with that emotional framework, it changes what you notice around you as well. Little annoyances don't seem as disturbing. Since attention is selective, your peaceful and positive emotional state predisposes you to notice lots of little blessings that you previously might have overlooked. This process becomes very self-reinforcing."

"I find this subject fascinating," Craig

said. "In fact, after each of our previous sessions, that evening I'd share with my wife some cool anatomy fact or principle I learned from you. I even gave each lesson a name."

"You're kidding," I said, bemused and curious. "If I might ask, what might you call this one?"

"The Anatomy of Happiness," he replied with a smile.

*Douglas Nelson is the founder and principal instructor for Precision Neuromuscular Therapy Seminars and president of the 16-therapist clinic BodyWork Associates in Champaign, Illinois. His clinic, seminars, and research endeavors explore the science behind this work. For more information, visit [www.nmtmidwest.com](http://www.nmtmidwest.com), or email [doug@nmtmidwest.com](mailto:doug@nmtmidwest.com).*



**Your physical state can affect your emotional well-being.**

# 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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# Massage for Seniors

## Bodywork Improves Quality of Life

Almost 35 million Americans are age 65 or older, and about 2,000 more reach this age every day. As the U.S. demographic shifts to an older population, it's important to find ways of helping our elders maintain their health and vitality. Massage for seniors is gaining importance as an alternative therapy to increase quality of life, and many massage therapists are getting special training to better serve this growing population.

### SENIORS' SPECIAL NEEDS

While similar in technique to other forms of massage, geriatric massage considers the special needs of the elderly. The specialty trained practitioner knows about positioning for greatest comfort and will often have the client rest in the same position for the entire massage. Mobility challenges

may dictate the massage be done in a bed or wheelchair. The therapist may also work both sides of the body at the same time to enhance body awareness, or only work hands and feet, if the client prefers. Sessions may be limited to 30 to 45 minutes, as older clients often do better with shorter, more frequent, massages.

The geriatric massage therapist is aware of health issues associated with aging and how to safely work with this type of client and with associated physicians. Consequently, the practitioner is able to individualize the massage service based on the client's health, mobility, and comfort level.

### BENEFITS OF GERIATRIC MASSAGE

A recent study conducted at the Weaver's Tale Retreat Center in Oregon looked

at the effects of massage for elderly clients. The results of the two-year study showed that participants experienced a decrease in breathing rate of 50 percent and an improvement in range of motion, posture, body awareness, skin color, and muscle tone. Furthermore, it is well documented that caring touch benefits emotional well-being in seniors -- a population at greater risk of suffering from depression.

Massage therapy can add to the quality of a senior's life, both physically and emotionally. Consider booking a session for someone you love, and make a difference in their life.

We have a full staff of LMTs to meet your needs:  
Andrea Cain (PA-MSG001681) is available: Mon 9:00-7:00 &  
Tues/Wed/Fri 9:00-3:00

Evan Kleinhaus (PA-MSG005888) is available: Fri 8:00-1:00  
& Sun 10:00-5:00

Jennifer Davy (PA-MSG013726) is available: Tues 3:00-7:00  
& Sat 11:00-3:00

Jen Mills (PA-MSG014101) is available: as needed

Nicole Fortney (PA-MSG011662) is available: Mon  
2:00-6:00, Wed/Fri 9:00-1:00

Karen Holmes (PA-MSG012056) is available: Sun 9:00-2:30,  
Mon 9:00-1:00 & Wed/Thurs/Fri 2:00-7:00

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We also have been adding new intuitive classes and offerings.

Keep an eye on our fb page and online scheduler for what's new!

## Relief Massage Therapy

405 East Chocolate Ave  
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