

Releaf Massage Therapy

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

The Power of Touch

In a High-tech World, It Pays to Reach Out

Nora Brunner

Physician and holistic health pioneer Rachel Naomi Remen once confessed that as a pediatric intern she was an unrepentant baby kisser, often smooching her little patients as she made her rounds at the hospital. She did this when no one was looking because she sensed her colleagues would frown on her behavior, even though she couldn't think of a single reason not to do it.

The lack of basic human contact in our high-tech medical system reflects a larger social ill that has only recently started to get some attention--touch deprivation. The cultural landscape is puzzling. On the one hand, we are saturated in suggestive messages by the

skin-to-skin contact is beneficial to human health, American social norms inhibit this most basic form of human interaction and communication. Despite our supposedly enlightened attitudes, we Americans are among the most touch-deprived people in the world.

"Touch deprivation is a reality in American culture as a whole," writes Reverend Anthony David of Atlanta. "It's not just babies needing to be touched in caring ways, or the sick. It's not just doctors and nurses needing to extend it. It's all of us, needing connection, needing to receive it, needing to give it, with genuine happiness at stake."



High-tech can mean low-touch. Ensure you're getting the tactile connection humans require.

mass media; on the other hand, the caring pediatrician is afraid someone might look askance at her planting a kiss on a baby's forehead. What's wrong with this picture?

Social Norms

Unfortunately, touch has become, well, a touchy subject. Though there's growing scientific evidence that

Distant, Disconnected

How did we come to deprive ourselves so tragically? According to Texas psychology professor David R. Cross, PhD, there are three reasons Americans don't touch each other more: fear of sexual innuendo, societal and personal

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*Acknowledging
the good that
you already
have in your
life is the
foundation for
all abundance.*

-Eckehart Tolle

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disconnection aided by technology, and the fact that the ill effects of non-touching are simply not that obvious and don't receive much attention.

It's no surprise Americans are often afraid physical touching signals romantic interest, which leads to the twin perils of either having our intentions misunderstood or wondering if someone's gesture is an uninvited advance. This ambiguity is more than enough to scare most people from taking someone's arm or patting them on the back.

The potential for the loaded gesture is further complicated by our litigious society in which unwelcome touch can mean, or be interpreted as, dominance, sexual harassment, or exploitation. People in the helping professions are regularly counseled on how to do their jobs without creating even a hint of ambiguity. In one extreme example, counselors at a children's summer camp were given the advice that when kids proactively hugged them, the counselors were to raise both arms over their heads to show they hadn't invited the contact and weren't participating in it. One wonders how the innocent minds of children will interpret this bizarre response to their spontaneous affection.

Another reason for touch phobia, according to Cross, is that we live in a society with far-flung families and declining community connections. Technology plays a significant role in the way we communicate, and it seems we move farther away from face-to-face communication with every new invention. How ironic that the old telephone company jingle that encouraged us to "Reach Out and Touch Someone" gave way to the slew of electronic devices we have today, all ringing and beeping for our attention. While these devices were invented to improve communication, some people wonder if the net effect is lower quality in our exchanges of information.

While there is scientific research showing non-touch is detrimental to health, Cross says those negative effects aren't obvious. The effects of a lack of touch are insidious and long-term and don't amount to a dramatic story for prime time.

"Humans deprived of touch are prone to mental illness, violence, compromised immune systems, and poor self-regulation," Cross says. So serious are the effects of touch deprivation, it's considered by researchers to be worse than physical abuse.

Benefits of Touch

Stated more positively, science does support the preventive health benefits of touch. For example, Tiffany Field, PhD, founder of the Touch Research Institute, notes that in a study on preterm infants, massaging the babies increased their weight and allowed them to be discharged earlier. Discharging babies earlier from expensive neonatal intensive care units could save the healthcare system \$4.7 billion annually.

In other research, scientists at the University of North Carolina found the

stress hormone cortisol was reduced with hugging. Cortisol is associated with anger, anxiety, physical tension, and weakened immunity.

Massage therapy has been found useful in reducing symptoms such as anxiety, depression, pain, and stress, and is helpful for those suffering with a variety of illnesses, including anorexia nervosa, arthritis, cancer, fibromyalgia, and stroke. While more research is needed, massage therapy has also been shown to reduce symptoms associated with alcohol withdrawal and smoking cessation, and can strengthen self-esteem, boost the immune system, increase flexibility, and improve sleep.

As a nation, we are still finding our way in terms of increasing our touch quotient; but those who make their way into a massage therapy room are farther along than most.



Massage helps boost self-worth and contribute to emotional well-being and connection.

The Wonders of Water

For Skin Health and More

Shelley Burns, N.D.

Creams, nutritional supplements, treatments, lotions, and potions. We are always looking for the next miracle product to keep skin looking healthy and young. However, there is one essential, inexpensive, and often overlooked nutrient right at your fingertips: water.

Just as a car cannot function without oil, our bodies cannot function without water. After oxygen, H₂O is the most important component of the body, responsible for 65-70 percent of its composition. And of this, 80 percent is dedicated to the skin.

Water is the medium for various enzymatic and chemical reactions in the body. It moves nutrients, hormones, antibodies, and oxygen through the blood and lymphatic systems, and it also helps form the matrix of the skin. Devoid of water, the skin becomes dehydrated, resulting in a dry, dull tone.

It's likely that the moment a person feels

thirsty, mild dehydration has already set in. To keep the complexion looking smooth and blemish-free, drink water upon waking and continue drinking it throughout the day at one- to two-hour intervals. At least six 8-oz. glasses of water should be consumed daily and more if you are exercising, perspiring, and/or in hot weather. Ideally, intake should be between ten and twelve 8-oz. glasses of water a day. One note: Don't increase water intake all at once, as the kidneys and digestive system need time to adjust. Add one 8-oz. glass every day or every second day.

What counts toward your daily water intake? Just the basics: water and herbal tea. Caffeinated beverages and alcoholic drinks are diuretics that can contribute to dehydration, requiring even more hydration after drinking.

Not only is water important for skin health, it can also play a key role in the prevention of disease. Drinking eight glasses of water a day can decrease the

risk of colon cancer, bladder cancer, and potentially even breast cancer.



Water helps keep the body at optimum health.

Try This Breathing Exercise

Anne Williams

Do you ever find yourself unconsciously holding your breath when you're tense? This can cause tension to build in your body and may let the chest collapse, leading to misalignment.

Proper breathing provides oxygen to the muscles and body, helps you stay relaxed and centered, and even helps you maintain correct body alignment throughout your day.

You can also use breathwork as part of a stress-reduction program by following this progressive relaxation exercise.

1. Begin by lying in a comfortable position without crossing your arms or legs, and focus on your breathing to create a slow, deep pattern. Inhale through your nose while counting to 10 and expanding your abdomen. Hold the breath for one second, and exhale

through your nose on the count of 10. Inhale and exhale in this pattern five times.

2. Beginning with your head, tense your facial muscles as tightly as possible and count to five. Release the muscles completely, and sense the muscles feeling heavy and still. Work down your entire body, tensing muscle groups and then relaxing them. After the head, move to the neck, chest, arms and hands, abdomen, back, thighs and gluteals, lower legs, and feet.

3. After relaxing each set of muscles, mentally scan your body for any areas of remaining tension and ask those areas to relax completely.

4. Repeat the slow breathing exercise.

5. Gently begin to move your body to come out of the deeply relaxed state.

Try using progressive relaxation directly

before or after your sessions, directly before bed, or at any time during the day as a pick-me-up. Focus on taking full, deep, even, rhythmic breaths. With a little practice, you can become more aware of your own breathing patterns and use breathwork effectively as you move throughout your day.

*"Your body
hears everything
your mind says."*

-Naomi Judd

2021, we're ready for you :)

We are adding a package option for the Bemer. After an initial use with instruction by myself, you can schedule an application time in the "Open hours" of:

Mon- 8:30-12:00pm

Wed- 2:30-4:30pm

Thur- 8:30-4:30pm

Fri- 2:30-4:30pm

These are free to schedule time options. If you would like an application prior to your treatment, you must inform your LMT prior to your massage, and arrive 10 min early.

Investment:

-\$15- treatment add-on (MUST INFORM LMT)

-\$20-1 time use (schedule in open hrs)

-\$55- 5 applications (can be mixed of open hr or add-on option)

Also, open to the option of short term rental depending on in office needs.

As always if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Wishing you a healthy & happy New Year!

Andrea Cain

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