

Stop Judging Your Beautiful Self

Massage Fits You (yes, YOU!)

Rebecca Jones

Sol Benson loathed her body. It went beyond mere embarrassment at how "fat" she was. Deeper still was the conviction that her body was unworthy of love, underserving of nurturing.

And it was that alienation from her own body that for years kept Benson, a professional dancer who has waged a lifelong battle with anorexia, from getting a massage. "I stayed away because getting a massage was being good to myself," said the 45-year-old Colorado mother of two, whose own mother and brother are massage therapists. "If I'm on a weight loss cycle, it's like 'I don't deserve love, I don't deserve food, I don't deserve to feel good about myself.'"

Benson explains, that helped the process. Her nonjudgmental ways helped Benson maintain balance. If, however, Rose had brought up weight, or in this case, the lack thereof, Benson admits it could have sent her into another purging cycle.

Managing Body Image

Benson's story illustrates just how complex the issues of body image can be in 21st century America and just how valuable bodywork is in mending distorted body image.

Developing a positive body image is about becoming present, grounded, open, aware, and unafraid to find what's

I asked for all things that I might enjoy life, I was given life that I might enjoy all things

-Unknown

Office Hours and Contact

Floyds Knobs Therapeutic

Massage Clinic, Inc

812 948-2799

Monday - Closed

Tuesday - Friday 9:00am - 6:00pm

Saturday 10:00am - 3:00pm



Self-acceptance is the first step to a healthier lifestyle and a happy relationship with yourself.

Benson credits Mary Rose--a Boulder, Colorado, massage therapist who has developed a special style of acupressure for the physically fragile--with understanding her psychological fragility enough to help her turn massage into a tool for healing, rather than a doorway to despair.

at the core and work through it. It's about being mindful, and listening to what your body has to say--a big step on the way to a healthier lifestyle and not necessarily an easy one to take. It requires courage and hard work to learn self-acceptance. And bodywork can play a key role in this endeavor.

It was the tender care from Rose,

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With America in the grip of an obesity epidemic--while at the same time holding up waif-like thinness as a cultural ideal--many people are worried about excess pounds and the harsh judgments that accompany them. Embarrassment at the thought of uncovering imperfect bodies for the close contact of a massage or bodywork session drives away untold numbers of potential clients.

The problem isn't limited to issues of weight. Many people avoid massage because of embarrassment about acne, surgical scars, birthmarks they consider unsightly, or some other physical deformity or flaw.

"A really common one is, 'I have such ugly feet,'" Rose says. "I always laugh and say that in 20 years, I haven't seen an ugly foot yet. People just have bad attitudes about their feet. In general, people are so self-judgmental."

Relax, Really

Massage therapists specialize in the human body. They don't judge; rather, they see anatomy.

"This is something that's so prevalent and something we deal with daily," says Jonathan Burt, 27, a Detroit massage therapist and massage instructor. "I can't tell you how often I've heard, 'I have to wait until I get into shape before I come in for a massage.' Clients think they have to be in shape before they can relax." Newsflash: Relaxation is not exclusive to model body types.

Given the increased blood flow that results from massage, as well as the benefits to the lymphatic and other body systems, Burt believes overweight people and others who suffer from limited mobility are the people most likely to benefit from a good massage. That's why he especially treasures his larger clients.

The idea of taking your clothes off for a massage is often more intimidating than the reality. In fact, practitioners make draping an art form, ensuring the client doesn't feel exposed. And by the way, says Burt, you're not the only imperfect body around here. "We all have flaws," says Burt, who gave his first massage at age seven, when his grandmother, a double amputee, asked him to massage her stumps. "Myself, I'm not the

American Gladiator. I inform people I have flaws as well, and I'd be more than willing to help them overcome their self-consciousness."

Viewpoint: Compassion

We're all in this together, and your massage therapist is operating from a place of compassion. Your practitioner is there to create and hold a safe space for you. Says Charlie Murdach, 38, a Portsmouth, New Hampshire, massage therapist, "For me, it's meeting the person where that person is and addressing that person in an appropriate and compassionate way."

Murdach, who has been a massage therapist since 1990, says he has yet to meet a potential client that he can't help, regardless of that person's physical condition. He believes this is due to the massage therapist's ability to avoiding

forcing anything, but to also being open to the possibility that miracles can happen.

Murdach explains your practitioner's role: "Whatever is going on with that person, whether it's a deformity or some type of disability, I make sure I can step up and hold the waters calm for that person. It doesn't matter if they're missing an arm, or have a deformed hand, the person who is standing there desires to move forward."

Getting a massage can do wonders for body image and help bridge the disconnect between the physical and emotional. A wounded psyche can lead you to believe you don't deserve a massage; this is when you most do! You are worthy--book your massage today.



Bodywork can boost self-esteem and confidence, and even improve body image.

No Pain, No Gain?

Bodywork Doesn't Have to Hurt to be Effective

Cathy Ulrich

Some people believe massage must be painful to be effective. While some modalities may be intense, this doesn't necessarily translate to a knuckle-biting experience. In fact, painful bodywork can be counterproductive. If you can't breathe comfortably, want to tighten up, make a face, or curl your toes, the technique is too much for you. Your body will go into a protective mode and actually block any positive change.

"No pain, no gain" just doesn't have to apply when it comes to bodywork. Be sure to provide feedback to your practitioner so that you're on the same page. Think of it as a "scale of intensity." On my scale, zero is not touching you and ten is pain--not the worst pain you've ever felt but the place where you want to hold your breath, tighten up, make a face, leave your body. That's a ten.

You shouldn't ever have to be in a pain range to get results, and be sure to let your practitioner know if you're in an eight or nine range. They may stay at

that level if that's where the therapeutic value will be attained, but again, only if it's manageable and you're not tightening up.

And every single client is different. Not only do individuals all start in different places, but their bodies respond differently, and their pain thresholds are extremely varied. What one person finds heavenly, another calls torture.

If it does feel too painful, be sure to tell your therapist. Usually, a practitioner can simply slow down to ease the intensity without losing therapeutic value. Sometimes, if you are nervous or stressed, just remembering to breathe will make your body more open, and you'll remain comfortable.

Bodywork needn't be a test of how tough you are. By giving your therapist appropriate feedback and understanding that painful techniques aren't really helping your body heal, you'll have a great experience in the session and feel better afterward.



Therapeutic massage actually feels good.

Hibernating is for the Bears

Plan to Stay Fit This Winter

Winter's here, and you've moved your running shoes to the back of the closet until April. Yet that piece of pumpkin pie has your name on it.

With the onset of colder weather, shorter days, and snow-covered streets, we eat more and exercise less, waiting for the spring thaw to get back in shape. Instead of having to make New Year's resolutions to lose holiday weight and join a health club, why not set goals to stay fit this winter?

MOVE FITNESS INDOORS

Winter is the perfect time to start a weight-training program. When it's sunny and warm in summer, you'd rather be outside cycling or rock climbing. When it's snowing, why not

lift weights for 30 minutes during lunch? Statistics show that more people suffer heart attacks in winter from shoveling snow, often because they're out of shape. With regular strength training, you'll be able to shovel that snow and get a head start with outdoor sports when spring comes around.

WALK OUTSIDE ON WEEKENDS

Going for a jog or walk during mid-day when the sun is high is a great time to get outside and catch a few rays. Be sure to dress warmly, wear sunscreen, and drink plenty of water. Dehydration is most common in colder months when you're less aware of fluid loss.

TAKE A DANCE CLASS

Accept that invitation to the New Year's

Eve celebration and take a class in ballroom dancing. While you're dancing, you're not hanging around the buffet table or the bar, and your waistline will thank you for it.

REDISCOVER ICE SKATING

Whether it's on a frozen pond or at a rink, ice skating provides seasonal exercise opportunities, especially good for the legs. And it's great fun, bringing out the kid in all of us.

CONSIDER SNOWSHOEING

Snowshoeing is just a matter of strapping snowshoes onto your boots and walking. Snowshoes make hiking trails and snowy city parks accessible and can be rented from sporting goods stores at a relatively inexpensive price.

*I asked for
riches, that I
might be happy,
I was given
poverty, that I
might be wise.*

-Unknown

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Floyds Knobs Therapeutic Massage Clinic, Inc.

3523 Paoli Pike

Floyds Knobs, IN 47119



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