THE BASICS OF MASSAGE THERAPY
MASSAGE 101
(WITH EMPHASIS ON THE PHILIPPINES)

by Eunice
yunesa@yahoo.com

This article/report is not intended to replace any seminars, workshops or trainings that are being taught by schools, associations, trainers, etc. but is intended to give a glimpse of massage therapy and present it in its most basic context. As part of alternative/complementary/integrative medicine, it should be accepted with an open heart and mind. As in all my writings, it is presented in a contemporary style and format with a focus on the Philippines and how it is practiced here. Therefore, not dogmatic in itself.

Ano ba talaga ang masahe? Bakit ba nauuso ang pagpapamasage? At ano ba talaga ang mga benepisyo nito? Masarap bang magpamasahe? Okay, first let us go back to the history of massage and what massage was. Massage is the simplest and oldest form of medical care. Professional therapeutic massage is an age-old healing art, which alleviates physical, mental and emotional ailments. The practice dates back to the Chinese in 3000 BC. Other references in the Bible refer to anointing the body with oil. In 460 BC Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine prescribed it as a beneficial treatment for his patients. Instinctively, we humans respond to pain by rubbing or pressing the area. Di ba pag nauntog ka hinahaplos mo agad o minamasahe unti-unti ang parte na nauntog? So instinct na talaga natin ang mag-massage especially Filipinos. We are gifted when it comes to touch therapy. Isa ito sa ating mga talents or gifts na bigay ng Poong Maykapal. The Philippines has a lot of indigenous therapies to be proud of including Tapik kawayan or bamboo tapping, Dagdagay (a form of foot massage) and more. Definitely, Filipinos excel in the area of touch therapy.

According to a combination of some State Board for Massage Therapy in the US, massage and massage therapy is defined as the manual manipulation or mobilization to affect normalization of the soft tissue of the human body consisting of rubbing, stroking, tapotement, pressing, shaking, or kneading with the hands, feet, elbow, or arms, and whether or not aided by any mechanical or electrical apparatus, appliances, or supplementary aids such as rubbing alcohol, gels, liniments, antiseptics, oils, powder, creams, lotions, ointments, or other similar preparations commonly used in this practice. Massage therapists may include adjunctive therapies such as hydrotherapy, mild

abrasives, heliotherapy, or topical preparations not classified as prescription drugs, mechanical devices and tools that mimic or enhance manual actions, and instructed self care. Such application may include, but is not limited to, friction, gliding, rocking, tapping, kneading, or nonspecific stretching, whether or not aided by massage oils or the application of hot and cold treatments. The practice of massage and bodywork is designed to promote general relaxation, enhance circulation, improve joint mobilization and/or relieve stress and muscle tension, and to promote a general sense of well-being. Massage therapy may be provided in response to a physician's prescription or in conjunction with other therapeutic modalities. A Massage and bodywork therapist" shall mean a person who represents himself or herself to the public by any title or description of services incorporating the words "bodywork," "massage," "massage therapist," "massage therapy," "massage practitioner," "massagist," "masseur," "masseuse," or who engages in the practice of massage and bodywork for a fee, monetary or otherwise.

According naman to PD 856 Chapter XIII of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Republic of the Philippines: massage is a method wherein the superficial soft parts of the body are being rubbed or stroked or kneaded or tapped for remedial, aesthetic or hygienic purposes. It also includes the practice of reflexology, synchrotherapy, physical therapy, and other similar techniques that use instruments and/or other parts of the body. So ang masahe ay isang napaka generalized term to indicate that muscles are being manipulated mostly for the purpose of relaxation. Sometimes for therapy purposes. Kaya marami tayong nakikitang mga spa na nag-o-offer ng massage at mga home massage services din.

What are the benefits ng massage? Marami and I will only name a few (I will not explain and delve into every single detail, suffice to know that these are the benefits, pros or advantages of getting a massage):

- It improves blood circulation and the flow of tissue fluid
- It helps stimulate the flow of nutrients and oxygen to tissues
- It lowers the heart and pulse rate
- It detoxifies the body systems
- Hasten excretion of waste products
- Assist in weight loss
- With the right oils, massage nourishes the skin

- Promotes repair and renewal of body cells
- Improves muscle tone
- Soothes and relaxes the nerves and aching muscles
- Relieves stress and has a relaxing effect
- Relieves pain in certain conditions
- Creates a feeling of well-being

So as you can see napaka raming benefits ng massage. Unfortunately, there are also many medical conditions in which massage is not appropriate. The body is being compromised by these conditions and massage may worsen the situation. If you are not sure, check with your doctor before having a massage. It's better to be safe than sorry. Below are some tips, precautions and contraindications of massage:

- Edema or pagmamanas- hindi tayo pwedeng mag massage sa area na grabe ang swelling, edema or pagmamanas. This is due to the fact na, there might be an underlying systemic cause to this edema and as massage therapists, we do not want to aggravate the situation. It is better if the client consults first a physician.
- Fever- hindi pwedeng whole body massage kung may fever. If you have headaches and fever, a light, gentle massage on the forehead that will just relieve the pain, can be tolerated but I do not recommend whole body massage. Lalo na sa may lagnat at trangkaso since you will be subjecting the client's body working overtime in order to counteract any toxin effects at the same time excrete them. We do not want to overwork the body as it is at the same time, the fever might be caused by an infection. Until that infection is being addressed to, I would like to advice to refrain from a whole body massage.
- Bruising or hematoma or pasa- It is better not to touch the bruised area.
- Broken Bones- of course common sense, huwag galawin ang may pilay BUT in some cases, yung may pilay ay nagagamot ng "hilot". As I told you in my first paragraph, I do not want to be dogmatic. There are some medical conditions na hindi pwede sa massage pero pwede sa "hilot". It's up to your discretion.
- Various heart conditions like high blood- kung high blood ka hindi ka pwede magpa masahe. This is a no-no. Especially pag mataas talaga ang reading ng blood pressure mo.

- Varicose veins- especially yung talagang galit na galit. Please do not put too much pressure on varicose veins baka pumutok yan.
- Never massage directly on infected skin- example, where there are warts, herpes, boils or where there is inflammation (pamamaga), unexplained lumps (hindi maipaliwanag na bukol), bruises and cuts.
- Pag pregnant- Although there is what we call pregnancy, maternal or prenatal massage, massage is best avoided during the first three months of pregnancy when the risk of miscarriage is highest.
- Pag may period, menstruation (regla)- yung ibang western thought pwedeng magpa massage kahit may menstruation, ako, I personally discourage it because as females, we sometimes have the tendency na maging prone sa hematoma or mag bruise during our monthly period. Also your period might stop after the massage session and we do not want that since ang monthly period is considered dumi ng katawan at dapat ilabas.
- Do not eat heavy right before a massage- At least two to four hours after meals
- It is advisable not to drink alcoholic beverages, smoke, take a bath or expose yourself to cold right after a massage as this will alter the temperature of your body and shock your systems. Thus, will not be good for the over all well-being. As much as possible, hot beverages like “ginger tea or salabat” or warm water is advisable rather than drink “iced tea”. Bakit mahalagang hot or warm? Because after a massage, your body has been exposed to heat and the last thing you want to do is expose yourself immediately to cold temperature. Na-sho-shock din ang katawan so give it time to adjust. Kaya yung mga matatanda may tinatawag na “lamig” (or what is scientifically referred to as nodules). There could be some truth in it, kasi nga naman pag galling sa mainit ine-expose natin ang katawan agad sa malamig eh di talagang yung mga pores natin mag-tra-trap ng lamig sa katawan dahil open sila due to exposure to warmth. Kahit naman sino hindi maganda ang sudden changes of temperature di ba?
- Be open to your massage therapist- if you feel any discomfort say so, if the speed of movement, pressure or technique needs to be changed say so and feel free to give feedbacks. Huwag mong tiisin kung nasasaktan ka na. When asked about any health-related information give your therapist accurate health information, do not withhold anything that is worthy of mentioning.

  A professional massage therapist should be able to ask you of your medical history (amongst other things): if you have any allergies, a history of high blood pressure, what area would you like to focus on, etc. Through the information/data you have given them, they will also be able

to assess the right type of massage/pressure for you or if they should refer you to another health care provider.

- Frequency/Duration- Be informed that massage has its greatest benefits over time. So, the more regular your massage is, the better you will feel in due time and the more quickly the body will respond to the therapy. For general preventive health maintenance, a 60-minute massage every two weeks or at least once every fifteen days is the ideal frequency. In cases of specific problems or dysfunction, more often is recommended (one every four days at the most), until an appropriate outcome is achieved.

When it comes to legalities naman ano ang dapat mong malaman? Okay, so in the Philippines, PD 856 of Chapter XIII Sec. 9.1.1 states that no person is authorized to practice massage in the Philippines without holding a valid certificate of registration for masseur issued by the Committee of Examiners for Masseurs and approved by the Secretary of Health. Meaning, if we are to be technical and dogmatic, hindi pwedeng mag massage ang isang tao if you are not licensed. Especially kung ito ang iyong source of income. Not unless you are under the direct supervision of a Licensed Massage Therapist. I also have a similar article on how to be a Licensed Massage Therapist and it is found in the following links:

http://howlicensedmassagetherapistphilippine.blogspot.com/

http://www.scribd.com/doc/6380163/How-to-Be-a-Licensed-Massage-Therapist-in-the-Philippines

http://www.helium.com/items/1031069-licensed-massage-therapist-philippinesso

http://www.ehow.com/how_2118585_be-licensed-massage-therapist-philippines.html

http://blog.360.yahoo.com/blog-Tk_FcgoobqgiAGV3E5M-?cq=1

But it doesn't mean na kung hindi licensed ang iyong massage therapist ay hindi na siya magaling. Hindi rin ibig sabihin na kung may license yung iyong massage therapist ay magaling siya mag masahe. Marami tayong magagaling na nag-ma-massage but they are not licensed. The best self-regulation here is for the massage therapist to know and assess the client well and adopt certain techniques in massage that would help the client and not harm them in any way. Yun lang. Generally

naman ang massage is non-invasive eh so no worries. We do not need to worry as massage has been used centuries and centuries ago.

There are also more than 400++ types of massage and we will only discuss yung mga pinaka-common. There are massage therapies that differs in:

1. Pressure - may madiin, may magaan, may medium pressure lang
2. Techniques- may inaapakan, may binubuhat, may ini-i-stretch, atbp.
3. And History- depende sa country of origin
4. As well as differentiation in the type of lubricant that massage therapists use. Sometimes, they use oil, cream, gel, lotion, powder or none at all. So it all depends on the type (or sometimes referred to as modality) of massage and the massage therapist or client's preference. Whatever one has to use, it has to have a beneficial effect to the body.
5. Client preparation- if they need to be half-naked, clothed or fully-clothed. Generally, only (as applicable) shorts with underwear are worn. Unless otherwise indicated.
6. Time or Duration- massage therapies generally runs an hour

Acupressure- This type of massage technique, are for certain areas lang, it is not designed as a whole body massage or application (otherwise you might mistake this as a Shiatsu) and it can be applied with our without lubrication, medium to hard ang pressure. The massage therapist may or may not use wooden sticks for massage, generally they use their fingers and thumbs.

Aromatherapy Massage or Aromassage- this is being incorporated into many massage modalities. As long as the massage therapist is using authentic (not synthetic) organic oils. This is essential oil/s blended with a carrier oil, pwede. So a Swedish massage can be an aromatherapy Swedish massage if the oils used are true aromatherapy oils and not synthetic ones. If these oils are plant-based it can also be considered Phytotherapy incorporated into massage. How can you be sure if its really organic and natural? Buy from reliable, credible sources and FYI, these oils are not cheap. Beware of imitations and cheap oils. Not unless you want mineral oils.

Chair Massage or On-Site Chair Massage- This type can be performed sitting upright on a stool or a low backed chair or a professional massage chair. This can be done in just five, ten, fifteen minutes to nearly an hour. Most commonly done for 30 minutes. Focuses on the back and shoulder area, nape

and head. Normally uses cream as lubricant and client is fully clothed. This can be incorporated with acupressure, hand reflexology or Indian Head massage. Pag Indian head massage, this can include the back, shoulders, arms/hands, nape/neck, head/scalp and face.

Deep Tissue- sometimes referred to as Sports Massage- as the name implies, deep, meaning do not expect a gentle pressure here and this is not a massage for relaxation but to ease aching muscles and knots. It is basically used to enhance sports performance and recuperation. An effective component of any training program. It may or may not be whole body as the therapist may focus on certain areas that are being specifically used in sports. Like the groin and legs if the client is a runner. It also involves some form of stretching and range of motion techniques. Duration is normally one hour to two hours.

Geriatric Massage- the opposite of infant or Pediatric has some form of gentle techniques specific to ease joint pains and other chronological symptoms of aging.

Hilot- there is a lot of conceptions (and misconceptions) regarding Filipino traditional hilot. One hilot may start in the back area and another in the head area and still another hilot in the leg area. In older generations, hilot is not sought after if a person is not sick. Historically, hilot is considered a healing modality. The techniques here are not important but the focus is the persona and energy that the manghi-hilot will impart. Herbal application with coconut oil is common. Sometimes, Sampaguita oil and ylang-ylang are being blended with the coconut oil. Other techniques or practice can add up to the experience like pulse reading, skin analysis, thermal diagnosis, banyos, suob or oslob (steam inhalation of aromatic herbs) amongst others. It can run from an hour to more than two hours. Hilot is not only relaxing but a healing therapy in itself. I suggest every Filipino to try this out so we will be able to appreciate our culture and heritage in this modality.

Hot Stone Massage- these are warm smooth stones applied either before or during the massage. It can be integrated into some types of massage too. The therapist typically employs Swedish massage techniques with the stones placed on your spine, palms of your hands and in between your toes, etc. It runs from an hour to two hours. Expect that this is more expensive than a typical massage because of the required preparation needed and the duration. These stones may also be used to massage certain areas of your body. A variation of this is the herbal ball massage common in Thailand. Where the herbal ball contains certain herbs, heated and applied on certain areas especially the back and

shoulders to relieve aches and pains. If you have persistent back pain, I recommend this type of massage (only if there is no underlying cause, just muscular in origin).

Infant or Pediatric Massage- as the name implies, it gentle massage is done on kids, children and babies.

Manual Lymph Drainage or Lymphatic Drainage Massage- sometimes referred to as Slimming massage or Anti-cellulite massage because of its pumping and suction techniques to improve the flow of lymph by using light and rhythmic strokes. A gentle form of massage din, duration is one hour to 2 hours depending on the spa, massage clinic or wellness center.

Pregnancy, Maternal or Maternity or Prenatal Massage- this is another variation of Swedish massage but focusing on relieving the discomforts of pregnancy.

Reflexology- if we are to be technical about this type or massage, reflexology only concerns itself focusing on the feet, hands and ears, not the whole body. So technically speaking, there is no such thing as whole body reflexology. If you have to have an authentic reflexology, it only concentrates itself on the hands, feet and ears. Today, this is incorporated into many massage modalities and even some spa menu like foot and hand spa. So this is a medium to deep compression massage which uses thumb and finger pressure (but the therapist may use instruments and lubricants to aid in the process sometimes) as there are specific points in the hands, feet and ears that correspond to the nerve endings of a particular organ or muscle.

Relaxation, Classical, European or Swedish Massage- generally a gentle to medium pressured massage that uses lubricants and a system of gliding strokes, kneading and friction techniques generally in the direction of the blood flow toward the heart. This is the most common form of massage. Typically runs for one hour only. This is my recommended massage for first timers.

Shiatsu- is a Japanese form of whole body, medium to hard pressure, clothed massage, similar to a Thai massage in that, it is done on a floor mat using the therapist’s finger, knuckles or thumb. May run from one to two hours long. Techniques may include: pounding, stretching, rocking and manipulation techniques. Pressure maybe applied by the use of forearms, elbows, palms, feet and knees. Meanwhile, Ashiatsu uses the bare feet of the therapist while the therapist hold on to an

oriental bar hanging on the ceiling. While Watsu (Water-Shiatsu) is Shiatsu done in water. So you see, massage also evolves in time.

Signature Massage- techniques are specific only to that specific spa and that the massage maybe a combination of three or more massage modalities. May run from thirty minutes, an hour or two hours long.

Thai Massage or Nuad Bo Ram- this is a more rigorous type as compared with other forms of massage because Thai massage employs a series of ranges of motion as well as combine active and passive movements of joints. Therefore this is not recommended for those who have difficulty in stretching or who has bone problems as this employs mostly stretching techniques. It is generally performed on a comfortable floor mat to allow maximum mobility that would allow the therapist to utilize their body weight. The client is fully clothed and no lubricant is required. Western style requires the client to undress for oils to be applied on the body and the massage is most often performed on a massage table. Typically this runs from one to two hours long.

Although massage lost some of its value and prestige with the unsavory image created by “massage parlors”, this image is now fading as awareness of the value and therapeutic properties of massage grows. Thanks to the proliferation of day spas all around, massage therapy is no longer viewed as a sexual service but a way to rejuvenate mind and body. So, professional massage therapists may terminate a session because of any illicit or sexually suggestive remarks or advances from the client. Although not a substitute for medical care, massage can reduce or eliminate the need for medication and surgery. Massage today is not only used for humans but pets and animals as well. A variety of massage techniques are now being incorporated into different programs and alternative/complementary therapies including osteopathy, chiropathy, etc. It has now gained popularity not only with well-off individuals but the common people as well. Making wellness a thing for everyone and not only for those who has the money.

As what I have said, massage therapy also evolves with time, you can combine techniques, you can adjust the pressure or make your own steps. We do not have to be dogmatic or too strict on steps and procedures, as long as the result is a better, rejuvenated client, then I do not think there is anything wrong with that. There are also a lot of other forms of massage that I have not mentioned.

But these are all for now. In short, there is a lot to learn out there and enjoy from the many variations of massage therapies.

So, what are you waiting for? Go to your nearest spa, massage clinic or call up a home massage service and try their massage today!

This article is written by: Eunice Estipona a spa consultant, mentor, adviser, speaker and lecturer. One of her advocacies is to make healing and information regarding the field of spa, massage and wellness accessible and affordable to everyone. If you are serious about turning your business or practice around, making the right decisions, getting an unbiased opinion and knowing where to get help, for lectures and other concerns she can be contacted at yunesa@yahoo.com or +639184745685. To find out how she can help you take your business to the next level, visit her site at http://www.meetup.com/philippinemassagetherapy/ These along with hundreds of resources found locally and abroad are contained in "The Spa, Massage and Wellness Resource and Career Book", the first book of resource information to know more about the Spa, Massage and Wellness Industry in the Philippines and other countries including the United States, Australia and other Asian countries. If you are a spa, massage therapy and wellness information seeker the resources contained in the book is for you. This book is a collection of data and valuable information regarding the spa and massage industry in a global perspective with a focus on the Philippines. Her advocacy in writing the book is to make "unbiased" information regarding the field of spa, massage and wellness resources and career,