

In the Balance

Massage news and tips for your good health

Sojourn Therapeutic Massage

815-741-9741

Fall Issue

stress relief

**reduced
muscle
tension**

pain relief

**more restful
sleep**

**improved
circulation**

**healthier
joints**

**improved
posture**

**quicker
recovery
from illness
and injury**

**fewer
headaches**

**restored
humor**

**increased
energy**

**improved
outlook on
life**

Touch Research Institute proves massage benefits

Massage reduces anxiety, depression, stress

The Touch Research Institute (TRI) of the Miami University School of Medicine began to document the benefits of touch in 1985.

TRI's research showed that premature babies who were massaged gained weight faster, showed greater responsiveness, and went home with their families earlier than babies who weren't massaged. Since then, research has shown massage benefits cocaine and HIV-exposed babies, infants of depressed mothers, and children with severe burns. Adults with fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, and HIV fared better with massage than with other kinds of relaxation techniques. New and on-going studies include research on the positive effects of touch to patients with carpal tunnel syndrome, lower back pain, and spinal injuries, and on children with ADHD and other behavioral problems. ~



Relaxing with massage helps reduce the effects of stress.

In all the studies we get reduced anxiety levels, reduced depression, and reduced cortisol levels which are an index of stress.

—Tiffany Field, PhD, director of TRI.

The Power of Breath

Breathe better and feel better

You can live a week without water, a month without food, but only a few minutes without oxygen. You can't generate energy in your body without oxygen. And energy is essential for your physical and emotional health. Thinking, moving, sensing, digesting, and every other function require energy.

Muscling your breath

Breathing involves the diaphragm, a bell-shaped muscle that separates the chest from the abdomen, and the muscles of the chest, abdomen, back, and neck. You even use the muscles of the pelvic floor to breathe when you exercise vigorously.

The diaphragm is the primary muscle of respiration, but many people don't use it efficiently. When people overuse the muscles of the ribs rather than the diaphragm to inhale, the lower lungs never get enough fresh air and the cells don't get enough oxygen. Overusing the secondary muscles can also cause muscle tightness and chronic pain in those areas.

Poor posture, weakness, lung disease, and even lack of understanding of the breathing process are some causes for inefficient breathing.

Releasing your breath

A massage therapist can help evaluate your breathing, work with you to release trigger points and tension that restrict your breath, and help you develop good habits. Elsewhere in your body, you can "breathe into" a specific muscle being worked, as this will enhance the release in that area.

By practicing good breathing habits, you can achieve full body breathing (see Exercise 2) and the benefits of balanced emotions, increased energy, and decreased tension and pain.

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Power of Breath (cont.)

Observe your breath

A natural rhythm of breathing includes an inhalation, exhalation and resting phase. Inhalation and exhalation should come easily. After exhaling, there is a stillness in the resting phase.

You can learn to observe the rhythm and correct it when it becomes imbalanced.

Some questions to ask yourself are: Does your inhalation overpower your exhalation? Can you rest between cycles? How long is the rest? Is the rhythm disturbed or uneven?

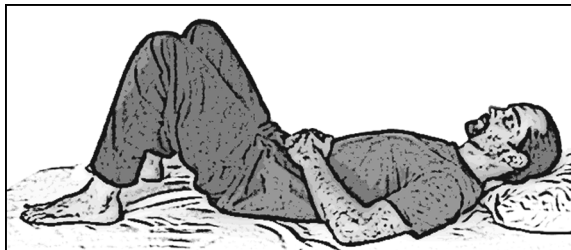
Watch your breath over the course of a day. Fear and anxiety cause fast, shallow breathing which, in turn, can increase those feelings. If you are tired, you may have an irregular, slow cycle with yawning as an attempt to increase oxygen input. When calm, the breath is usually regular, light, and relaxed. The goal is to calm our breath when we are stressed, helping mind and body relax.

Here are two breathing exercises to help you relax and increase your awareness.

Exercise 1

This is a simple way to relax and tune into your state of mind and body.

Sit up straight or lie flat. Rest your hands lightly on your stomach. Slowly and deeply inhale through your nose, pushing the hands outwards. Then slowly exhale, squeezing the belly tight. Try to practice abdominal breathing when you wake up and then again when you get in bed at night.



Exercise 1: Deep abdominal breathing helps you relax and tune in to how you are feeling.

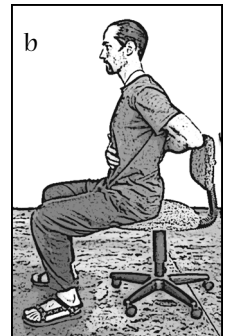
Exercise 2

Sit comfortably in a chair with closed eyes and observe the breath. Use no effort. Observe the inhalation, exhalation and resting phase. Notice how long the phases are and how the breath moves in the torso.

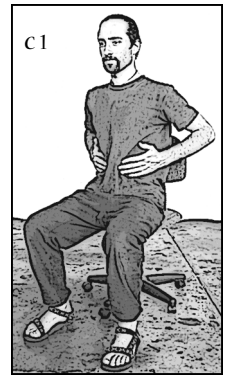
a. Then place one hand beneath your naval and one on your tailbone and notice the movement in these areas.



b. Now move one hand to your mid-back and one hand above your navel. In what direction do the expansions and contractions move?



c. When you are ready, place your hands first on both sides of your lower ribs, then on either side of the chest under your armpits. Watch the breath come and go.



d. Finally, observe your whole body breathing. By practicing this kind of observation, you can learn to notice when your breathing changes in response to stress, exercise, moods, and rest. The awareness will help you develop rhythmic, effortless breathing. ☺



Exercise 2: This will help you learn to fully expand your rib cage when breathing, an excellent way to develop effortless breathing and release tension.

*Calmness is the living breath of God's immortality in you.
—Parmahansa Yogananda*

Quick tips for self-care

Take care of yourself in-between massages

Massage not only feels great, it's been shown to help you stay healthy. In-between sessions, here are some ways to prolong those wonderful benefits.

Take time to relax

Practice letting go of things that you can't change and change your schedule to include more down time. Go away for the weekend, or even just for an hour! Don't ignore your breaks at work—step away from your desk and take a few deep breaths.

Exercise regularly

Exercise increases the flow of endorphins, natural pain relievers that are responsible for what is called "the runner's high." Check with your physician to ensure that your activity level is right for you. Increase the length and frequency of your sessions gradually and you may find yourself looking forward to them as a fun break in your day.

Drink water

Fluid is squeezed from your muscles during massage, bringing in new blood and nutrition. Drinking water after a massage is important to help rehydrate your tissues and carry away the flushed waste products that can cause soreness and fatigue.

Stretch

Take stretching breaks several times a day to prevent aches and pains from building up. Gently and slowly stretch whatever feels tight in your neck, back, and limbs. Here is a simple routine to follow no matter what part you are stretching. Exhale, stretch to a comfortable tension, hold, and relax as you inhale and come back to your starting position. ~

Packing a load



Children may develop neck and back pain from carrying their backpacks.

These days it is a rare child who doesn't head off to school with a backpack of books and supplies. Pediatricians, physical therapists, and massage therapists are seeing more young patients complaining of neck and back pain, and the culprit is often an over-loaded backpack.

You can help your children strategize about how to lighten their load.

Do they have a locker where they can store books they're not using? Must they carry all their books every day? You might consider purchasing a pack on wheels or an individually fitted

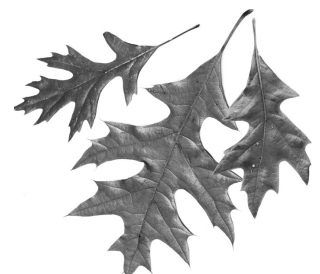
internal frame backpack, designed to make packing easier on the body.

If your daughter or son already has problems, see your health practitioner right away. And remember, massage can help relieve muscle spasms and improve posture. ~

Fall and Winter Outdoors

When you go outside in the next few months, it may be for vigorous activities like raking leaves, pruning, or shoveling snow. Consider stretching to give your muscles a chance to warm up before going out into the cold to work. Start your activities slowly, gradually stepping up the pace.

Massage can help keep your muscles and joint tissues healthy to get your chores done and relieves muscle strain when you overdo it. ~



Your newsletter on massage! See inside:

- Touch Research Institute proves benefits of massage
- The power of breath
- Quick tips for self-care
- Lightening your child's backpack
- Fall and winter outdoors

CHRISTMAS

HANUKKAH

KWANZAA

WINTER SOLSTICE

NEW YEARS



THE ONE GIFT

EVERYONE

LOVES IS ...

Massage!

Stressed at the Holidays?

Unwind with massage

Do you try to do too much at the holidays? Are you anxious meeting social and family obligations? Women especially may have trouble taking time for themselves during the holiday season. Many people cancel their massage appointments during the winter holidays—just when they need it the most. But you may find it's the best gift you can get.

Massage can help you let go, breathe deeply, and bring you back to balance. If your arms hurt from carrying too many groceries and gifts, or your feet hurt from standing while cooking and shopping, massage may be just the ticket to relax and revive. And studies show that it can prevent injuries and even boost the immune system! So you can avoid injuries and the flu at the same time you rejuvenate for the holidays you celebrate. ~

