

An Ode to Massage —

Lessons from a Lifetime of Body Tune-Ups



Denis Ouellette, LMT, OBDS

the legs, especially up by the hips), the insides of the calf muscles near the knees, and in the quads (strong muscles in front, above the knees). Pain in the front of the delt (shoulder cap) muscle is usually more pronounced on the dominant side. This is a muscle area that just works awfully hard for most people, whether it's physical labor or computer work, and it will usually present hidden pain. Once you start exploring, though, *oh!*—can these areas reveal what they've been storing. The good news is that, with just the right bodywork and breathwork, they CAN be released, and this will free up a lot of energy. Chronically tense muscles and other blockages are robbing you of energy in the background.

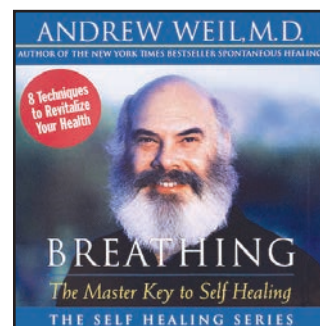
The wonderful thing about the body is that, if we can just get 10–20% of these hot spots (trigger points) relieved, then 80–90% of the pain can go away.

Good therapy just stays there, patiently working on those key spots until true release happens. There's no rush... and you CAN communicate with these muscles, through the nervous system and breathing. With just the right amount of pressure and various techniques, they will finally let go of even YEARS of accumulated tension, waste buildup, structural dysfunction, etc.

Say, when did you say your last tune-up was?

When you get a massage and loosen up much of your muscle tension BEFORE a chiropractic adjustment, then there's a better chance, FIRST, that the bony structure, especially along the spine, will respond and cooperate, and SECOND, that the adjustments will last, because that chronic-tension pattern will not be there to pull that vertebra or bone back out of place. Long-term resolution of injury, misalignment, or strain involves addressing a combination of symptoms and systems holistically.

2) The BREATHING & NERVOUS SYSTEMS. This familiar face belongs to Dr. Andrew Weil, one of the pioneers of holistic health in this country. This is his CD course, "*Breathing, The Master Key to Self Healing.*" As a young doctor, he traveled to the Far East. He thought he'd be learning about exotic



After a tune-up and oil change, you say things to your mechanic like: "Great, I'm good for another 3000 miles." "She's really hummin' now!" and "My acceleration is much better." Well, after a good BODY tune-up, you'll be saying similar things to your therapist! We wouldn't think of NOT doing regular maintenance and repairs on our precious motor vehicle... running it low on oil, or driving it with low air in the tires. But how many miles have you put on your BODY since its last tune-up?

The first Model-T rolled off Henry Ford's assembly line in 1913, and today we know a lot about cars. How ancient is the human body—back to Adam and Eve? Still today, how much do we really understand about our far more precious body systems? Yes, we know that a great massage soothes sore muscles and creates relaxation, but it can do so much more. Let's take a look under the hood.

1) The MUSCLES & BODY STRUCTURE. In a good massage, we usually address the hurtingest body parts first, but you'll notice there's some muscle pain you know about, and some you don't—until we start digging around a bit. Just about everyone comes in wanting their shoulders, upper back, low back, and neck worked on. And we do address those areas to get relief. But as we progress, the client will report pain in areas of chronic tension they didn't know they had. Typically these hide in the lats (upper sides of the back), in the glutes (deep in the upper butt and hip-joint areas (where low-back pain can usually be traced back to), the IT bands (outer sides of

diseases, like *tsetse fly sleeping sickness*, but what do you suppose he discovered were the #1 most prevalent disorders and diseases? It was issues related to stress and anxiety.

He brought back and introduced to Western medicine a better understanding of the **Autonomic Nervous System (ANS)**. This system governs ALL of your INTERNAL functions, most notably your digestion, glands and hormones, heart rate, and immune function. Your internal nerves are immediately sensitive to any stress triggers (*real or imagined*). When you go into “fight-or-flight,” digestion shuts down, as does the functioning of the immune system. Stress hormones get released: *“I can’t fight germs right now; I’m running from a bear!”*

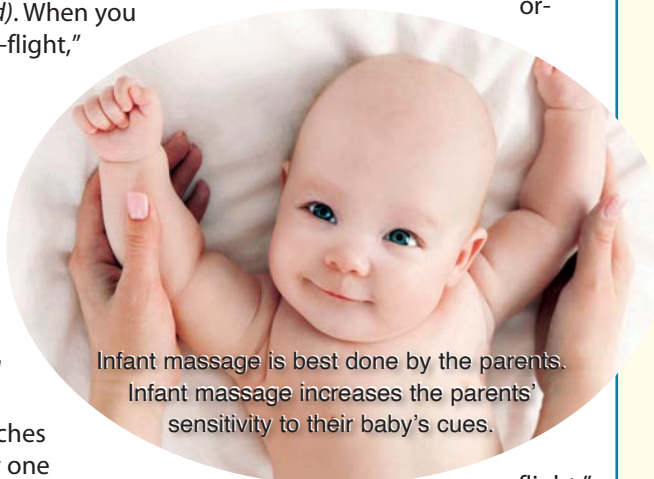
Dr. Weil teaches that there’s only one effective entryway into the influencing of the ANS to calm it down—and that’s through **conscious breathing**. All great bodywork includes breathwork.

A breath-savvy therapist will help you correct and improve any dysfunctions they discover (such as predominantly high-chest breathing). Every time the therapist moves into a painful area, it will be accompanied by a wonderful exhale, as in—*Hhaaaaaaawwwwww!* (Otherwise, the ANS interprets this as **INVASIVE** pain, which will trigger a counterproductive stress response.) Just as in yoga, along with every good stretch comes a good, deep breath.

For best results, every letting go of pain must also be a letting go, through the breath and the ANS, of the inner

patterns of thought and feeling, and a releasing of the cellular, nerve, and muscle memories of the original trauma.

3) The IMMUNE, LYMPH & DIGESTIVE SYSTEMS. We’ve all heard the buzzwords for the sympathetic (“stress response”) side of the ANS as “fight-or-flight.” The buzzwords for when the body finally arrives over to the parasympathetic side of the ANS are: “rest, digest and heal.” These three goals simply cannot be achieved when a person is stuck in “fight-or-



Infant massage is best done by the parents. Infant massage increases the parents’ sensitivity to their baby’s cues.

flight,” and unfortunately, for most of us—that’s MOST of the time! That’s our modern-day *tsetse-fly* dilemma. **A good body tune-up can get you there!**

The therapist will also be on the lookout for another “weirdish” kind of pain that’s usually associated with stagnation and blockage of the lymph system, and usually found in places like along the insides of the shinbones, and on the webs between the toes, but mainly behind the pec muscles near the armpits (see baby, above).

The lymph system is the body’s water-based, waste-removal system that lies just under the skin. Stagnant lymph is like “leaves from last fall still stuck in your rain-gutters.” The

Direct Benefits of Massage

1. Deep Relaxation

All types of massage provide an overall sense of calm and deep relaxation. The therapist will find those muscle areas that hurt from chronic tension and inflammation, and will relieve stiffness, cramps and muscle spasms. Releasing those painful areas will trigger the nervous system to let go of stress.

2. Lymph Circulation & Blood Oxygenation

Massage, especially when combined with Breathwork, will increase the oxygen levels in the blood, help to flush out acid waste, clear up swelling in the limbs, and get the lymph fluid flowing better—especially in areas where it tends to stagnate. Oxygen-rich blood circulation is the #1 promoter of healing.

3. Stronger Immune System

Chronic stress is a worldwide human problem. When a body is “stuck in fight-or-flight,” the immune system actually shuts down—a very dangerous situation! Regular massage will stimulate the body’s natural resistance to infection, reduce your stress levels, and boost your ability to recover from and prevent disease.

4. Improved Mental & Emotional States

Massage will brighten your overall outlook on life. It can undo that sense of irritation, relieve anxiety, and help you cope with depression. Massage can improve your quality of sleep, and the detoxification can improve chronic fatigue. Massage boosts your serotonin and endorphins, lifting your mood and helping you feel happier.

5. Healing from Injury & Disease

Massage is not a cure-all and won’t heal you from serious conditions. However, massage creates the best bodily environment for self-healing. Better circulation of oxygenated blood will promote the healing of light injuries and mitigate certain diseases. If your doctor recommends that you get massage, don’t hesitate!

6. Better Skin Tone

Massage directly enhances skin circulation, quality, exfoliation and tone—making the skin glow. The massage can even help to keep the surface of your skin soft and smooth, and prevent premature aging. Make sure to drink plenty of water after your session. ■

therapist will get all that moving again, and this will prevent a world of problems later on.

4) The ENERGY SYSTEM. Energy is a funny thing because it's always everywhere and influencing everything, but also invisible and not paid much attention to. Energy exchanges happen all the time—with a smile (or a frown), with every word we say, and along with the lightest touch. A lot of energy-flow happens in a massage, especially when there is copious breathing going on.

We can think of energy as the animating life-force of the universe. It goes on *"within you and without you,"* to quote George Harrison. In massage, no matter what modality they practice, good therapists will be LESS concerned about the energy exchange between client and therapist (in either direction) and MORE concerned about connecting to the universal source of unlimited power and energy, and letting THAT move in, through and around the session, leaving both therapist and client happy, filled up, and energized.



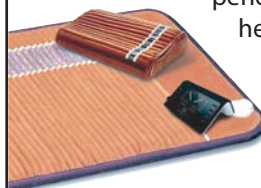
You don't have to see the wind to perceive its effects. You don't have to *understand* energy work, but you can still respect it, acknowledge it, invoke it, and allow it to do its perfect work alongside of you. Again, breathing work is the #1 facilitator of energy movement. Oxygen (inhaling) is our #1 source of fuel. Exhaling is our #1 means of detoxification.

5) STRETCHING & MOVEMENT. A good session includes a lot of great stretching moves and most of them will be super-slow. When you take a lot of time to pull an arm, or both legs, for example, it gives NOT ONLY the muscles and nerves, at the cellular level, a chance to open up and relieve constrictions, BUT ALSO the fascia—the body's superstructure, which will always resist quick, herky-jerky stretches.

When stretches and other flowing movements (*effleurage*) are done super-slowly, as when pressing upward along the spinal muscles, then the nervous

system can predict the movement and cooperate in its communication to the muscles, allowing them to TRULY let go. Increased range of motion (without pain) and more ease of movement are the immediate, evident results of a good massage.

6) The BIOMAT. (See ad, below.) The far-infrared heat coming from this highly advanced heating pad penetrates 6–8 inches into the body and heats muscles and organs through and through.



The mat also emits negative ions, like those that appear after a thunderstorm, or in the presence of a waterfall. The extensive

research on the benefits of this mat shows that warming the body like this activates dormant enzymes (the biocatalysts of the body). And at the high-heat setting, they say it even kills cancer cells. This luxurious heat, through amethyst crystals, truly melts away tension on several levels. Clients say that lying on the Biomats alone is worth the price of admission...

So, what can YOU expect from a 60- or 90-minute body tune-up? Well, like the mechanic says: a better hum in your engine, less wear and tear, and better mileage overall. And with continued maintenance, you can enjoy a longer life and a healthier, more trouble-free vehicle.

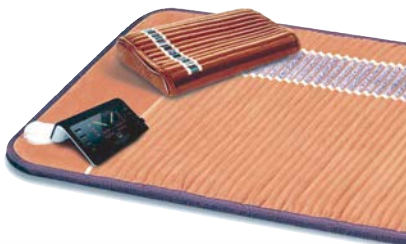
Giving all your body systems a rest and a reset can change the whole trajectory of your outlook on life. Yes, the muscles are the obvious beneficiaries, and they will be happier and freer, but their OWNER gets to move through life without all that accumulated stress. The ripple effect of that is far-reaching. A body tune-up is the best thing you can do for yourself—**get yours today!** ■

Denis Ouellette, LMT has been doing bodywork and breathwork for 25+ years. He works out of his studio in Livingston (call 333-4103) and is also available in Bozeman on Wednesdays and Fridays at Able Chiropractic on 19th Avenue. Call 548-8822 to schedule an appointment at Able Chiropractic.



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