

Healing Hands

by Marcia Detwiler Scupin

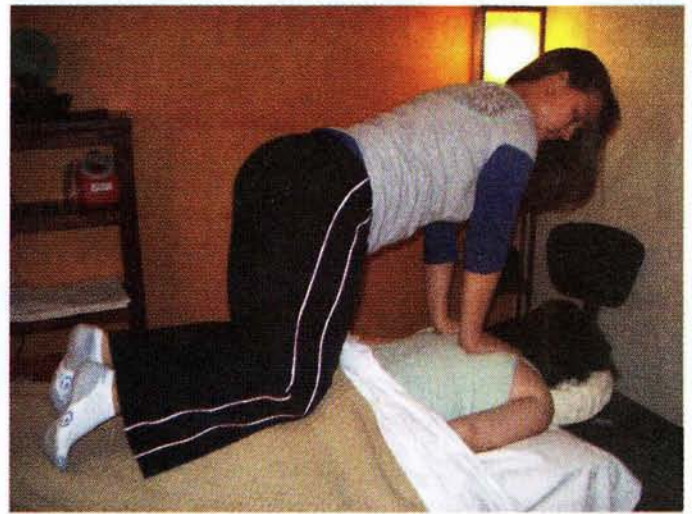
This month, *Natural Awakenings* takes a close look at "bodywork," a term used to describe healing modalities that involve everything from gentle touch to deep physical manipulation of the body. Bodyworkers provide relief from many types of illnesses, injuries, diseases and conditions, even emotional issues; many clients are referred from allopathic doctors and chiropractors.

Many people think bodywork and massage are one and the same; however, massage manipulates the body's soft tissues by rubbing, kneading or tapping, but bodywork includes a wider circle of therapeutic touch, some of which doesn't focus on muscles or connective tissue at all.

Alexcis Reynolds, L.M.T., owner of A Transformative Touch, says that her bodywork is about "...getting people out of pain and back in touch with their emotions. It's not spa-like: it's very therapeutic." Reynolds works with an internist who sends his patients suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, sciatica, injuries, PTSD, anxiety or panic attacks and migraines. Her practice employs a small, dedicated group of professionals who offer massage, yoga therapy, acupuncture and energy work. Reynolds' philosophy of healthcare involves personal responsibility and prevention. She sees her role as offering an array of complementary and alternative modalities to help people who want to be well. "We give them tools to turn their attention to living a happier, healthier life."

Sometimes a strong commitment to personal health and a better planet leads a person to incorporate bodywork and massage into his or her life. Mara Concordia, owner of Peaceful Spirit Massage & Wellness Center, believes that "bodywork is one mechanism for transformation and evolution as beings." Mara employs 15 massage therapists and a host of others who do clinical-level work in massage, acupuncture and other healing modalities. "Stress is a precursor for the disease process and it exacerbates what's already going on," Mara says. "When people combine what they can do at home to reduce stress with consistent professional visits, it keeps them accountable to themselves and gives them that outside feedback."

Some bodyworkers are also physical therapists. For example, Dorsett Edmunds, a P.T. at a local hospital, also teaches and practices Zero Balancing, an integrative therapy that was founded by an osteopathic medical doctor who was also an acupuncturist. Dorsett says, "It's a combination of working with the structure and the energy of the body." This modality works at the level of bone and foundational



Thai massage is also known as Thai yoga massage because the therapist, like April Castro, L.M.T., above, at A Transformative Touch, uses her hands, knees, legs or feet to move you into a series of yoga-like stretches that is more energizing and rigorous than traditional massage.

joints to balance the body through informed and skilled touch. The therapist uses a series of fulcrums that are gently held until balance is achieved.

Independent bodyworker Evin Abromowitz, L.M.T., is studying to become a physical therapist to augment her practice, which includes deep-tissue, sports, injury-specific, Swedish and myofascial-release massage. "My passion is helping people function in their lives. I like to help them reduce pain and heal their bodies." Evin says she teaches clients how to care for themselves at home. "A good bodyworker can help clients be progressive in their healing. Massage therapy and bodywork is also good for people who have an illness, such as cancer, since it helps reduce stress and assists their body in repairing itself."

Karen Brungardt, D.O., is a retired physician who, because of her own spinal-fusion surgeries, learned BowenWork, which is also known as the Bowen Technique. "BowenWork uses a very gentle touch with very profound results," says Karen. "It can cure permanently from within by giving the body signals." BowenWork distorts a resting muscle or tendon and then rolls over it at a precise location without sliding on the skin. The resulting changes in the tissue stimulate the autonomic nervous system to rebalance. Blood and lymph fluids move through the fascia more easily, bringing nutrition and promoting detoxification.

Reflexology focuses on areas in the feet and hands that correspond to all of the glands, organs and parts of the body. Carol Crockett, a registered nurse who is nationally certified in reflexology, says it relaxes the body and unblocks the body's nervous energy. "The body is an electrical system and I stimulate that system." Carol says that reflexology cannot cure chronic diseases but can slow



Mara Concordia

Karen's Write-up



Karen Brungardt