

MASSAGE THERAPY MODALITIES 101 FOR THE SPA CONCIERGE

By Her Zen Network



MASSAGE ROOM ITEMS & SUPPLIES

- Massage tables
- Chairs
- Stools
- Sound machines for music
- Shelves
- Blankets
- Hand sanitizer
- Table warmer
- Sheets
- Face cradle covers
- Pillow cases

When looking for massage tables, look for portable tables that are of good quality. Don't concern yourself with trying to get the cheapest thing that's available. Look for something that will be comfortable for the clients.

The client's well being should be first and foremost. The tables should be flexible and include a headrest that can be adjusted to different heights.

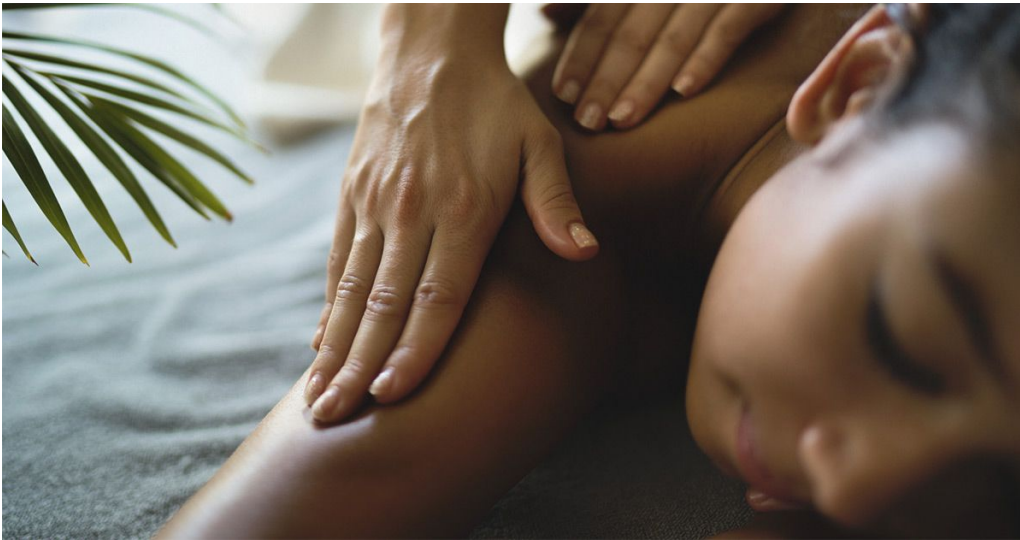
You want to get tables that have plenty of foam. Foam will help to make the table soft to lie on. The foam should also make the table sturdy and long lasting. It should be able to endure all kind of conditions.

Using a sound machine can create a soothing atmosphere for the client as they lie on the table getting a massage. It will make a difference between in how they view the entire massage therapy experience. Find music that will help the client & therapist to enjoy their experience.

As a Spa Concierge, you may need to mix & blend different types of massage oils that the Massage Therapist will use on the client. You will also need a showcase of additional products to market to the clients.

Massage Techniques & Modalities found in Spas & Wellness Centers

Here are some different massage therapy techniques that are popular with clients:



Swedish Massage

This massage was created by a gym instructor from Sweden named Pehr Henrik Ling. He started this technique at the Royal Central Institute of Gymnastics. The Swedish Massage is used in table massage.

There are five different types of strokes that are incorporated with this massage:

- **Effleurage** – This stroke is used for lubricant application. It is also used to get your clients to get familiar with your touch. This French word means glide or flow. That is what you are doing when you use this stroke.

You allow your hands to get deep into the skin and the muscles. This can be done in the same area a few times. Go with the shape of the client's body, using this stroke over the entire area that is being massaged.

This stroke can also be used for detecting muscles tightness. Using Effleurage can help to remove toxins from your body. This stroke can be performed with one or both hands. There should be a continuous blood flow to the client's heart as you apply the strokes.

- **Petrissage** – This is a kneading stroke. Put the client's soft tissue in your hand and lift it, then squeeze it, and release it. Repeat the process for the affected area. This stroke has to be performed in a slow and firm manner.

This kneading stroke disposes of toxins and waste from the soft tissues. Blood along with oxygen replaces it and provides nourishment.

- **Friction** – This stroke is also called a compression because you are pushing down and squeezing the tissue. Along with this is the compression stroke that provides more circulation. In order to work this, you slide your hands in a back and forth motion across the client's skin.
- **Vibration** – This stroke deals with shaking. It involves rocking with a rhythm at a slow pace. You can use your fingertips or hands. Some therapists will use electrical items. However, it is not necessarily prudent to use anything electrical.

They can cause your client's skin to become numb and without feeling. In addition to that, the therapist may lose nerves in their hand. You can do this vibration stroke in one of three ways: rocking, coarse, or fine.

With the fine version, it works with the digestive system. For the coarse version, another word for this method is jostling. This method helps to loosen muscles in your joints.

- **Tapotement** – This stroke is considered as a light blow or touch. It has a rhythmic method in which the edge of the palm is used. You can also use the heel of the hand. It is used as a stimulator. It is also used to relieve cramped muscles.

With Swedish massages, a massage therapist will have to use oils in order for the treatment to be effective.

Shiatsu

Shiatsu is a Japanese version of a massage. The word means “finger pressure”. So Shiatsu is a finger pressure massage. This type of massage uses the holistic method. It is considered to be part of traditional Chinese medicine. In this case, the belief is that imbalances from natural energy flow cause people to become ill.

Massage therapists that use this method use their fingers and pressure from their palms of their hands. They do this to open up pathways of energy. If someone’s nervous system is out of whack, Shiatsu is used to cure that or at least bring peace to that area of the body. It is also responsible for circulation improvement, relaxing muscles and gets rid of stress.

This method is performed by adding pressure to the affected area using a rhythmic motion. It is considered to be a more localized pressure. The finger pads put pressure on the majority of this treatment and not the whole palm.

When applying this massage, there may be tenderness in some of the affected areas. This is described as “good pain”. However, if a client should feel real pain during this process, they should let their therapist know immediately. They can adjust the pressure that they are applying to the client and alleviate their discomfort.

Shiatsu is used to alleviate a lot of ailments. Some of them are listed here:

- PMS
- Headaches
- Stress
- Injuries
- Arthritis
- Constipation
- Indigestion
- Neck pain
- Shoulder pain
- Back pain

When you go for your Shiatsu treatment, it will be conducted on a low massage table or you will be lying on the floor. You don't use massage oil with this particular massage. You also keep on your clothes. It's a good idea to wear something comfortable when you come for your massage treatment.

You should not consume any heavy meals before the Shiatsu treatment. This can cause you to feel sluggish and you won't get the benefits from having the massage session.

If this is your first session, it's a good idea to get there at least 15 – 20 minutes prior to your appointment time. You will have to fill out paperwork and you don't want to run into your time doing that. You also want to have a chance to relax for a few minutes, regardless of whether or not you're filling out paperwork.

If you fall under one of the following categories, it is advised that you do not engage in Shiatsu:

- Recently had surgery
- Skin ailment that is infectious or wounds that are open

- If you have inflamed or broken skin
- Fractures
- Osteoporosis – check with your physician
- Cancer treatments
- Pregnant women – check with your doctor

Acupressure

Acupressure is a massage therapy treatment that is similar to acupuncture, but without the needles. Manual pressure is used with the fingertips on specific areas of the body. This is derived from traditional Chinese medicine which employs energy from the body called “chi”.

This energy connect with invisible parts of energy flow. This is called meridians. There are supposedly at least 14 of them that have connections with some of our other organs. Acupressure points are situated on those meridians. The belief is that health ailments and diseases run rampant when chi flow is blocked on any of the meridian points.

To alleviate that, the therapist will apply pressure to an acupressure point in one area of your body to heal another area. That may sound strange, but that’s how acupressure works. Some people thinks that pressure in one area can release endorphins, which are chemicals in a person’s body that relieve the affected area of natural pain.

The purpose of acupressure is to relieve people of certain ailments. Some of them are:

- Headaches
- Menstrual cramps

- Nausea from pregnancy, surgery or chemotherapy
- Muscle tension
- Muscle pain

Using acupressure has been found to get rid of nausea symptoms. There is a certain meridian point in the wrist area where you can apply pressure to get rid of nausea.

Acupressure is conducted with the client lying on a massage table. Pressure is applied with the finger, knuckle or thumb. The pressure should be firm, but gentle in touch. Every half minute the pressure increases.

When doing it with the wrist, the palm should be facing upwards. The thumb should be where the hand meets the wrist. Using the measurements of two fingers, the thumb should be placed there.

You may feel pressure during the treatment, but you should never feel pain. If you do, let your therapist know immediately.

There are some people with certain ailments that shouldn't have this treatment or they should proceed with caution:

- Pregnant women - consult your doctor
- No acupressure treatment should be done on bruises or open wounds

- Anyone that has thin blood should not do this unless advised to do so
- Bone ailments, injuries, diabetes – if a person is suffering from any of these, they should not do it unless advised to do so

After the treatment, the client may feel sore at those particular points and may also experience lightheadedness. Both of these are temporary side effects.

Trigger Point Therapy

This massage therapy treatment works on treating muscles and layers of muscle attachments. This treatment is also responsible for dealing with surface muscles, ligaments, and connective tissues. This massage therapy is similar to acupressure. The majority of the methods used in Trigger Point Therapy are also used in acupressure.

Trigger points can be found up and down the client's body near the muscle area. For the most part, they can be found in the axial muscles. These muscles are responsible for side to side body movement. Trigger points can also be found in one than more location of the body.

With these points, pain is found in certain areas. These areas are referred to as reference zones. The pain in these areas is usually deep and it can be continuous or it will come around for a while, leave, and then come back again. If a trigger point is worked, it can be inflicted with pain.

There are two types of trigger points, active and latent. Active points consist of nagging pain. Latent points don't experience pain until the affected area is pressed.

Trigger point therapy is one of the most popular massage therapy treatments that is being used.

In a treatment session, there is an examination that is conducted. This examination includes focusing on the pain area and where discomfort is being felt. The massage therapist main focus is to look for poor posture, and straining of the muscles.

The client has to be relaxed in order for the treatment to be successful. The therapist can recognize the trigger points because they will be tender, hard or knotty.

After the therapist has found the trigger points, the area will feel pressure and what is called skin twitching. Trigger point therapy is also used to get rid of muscle spasms and cramps.

Sports Massage Therapy

Athletes would greatly benefit from this type of massage therapy. This type of massage therapy is worth the investment for a massage therapist. Just doing this alone could prove to be a lucrative career.

Athletes are competitive in nature because they are supposed to be. Each one wants to do better or outdo the other person. The main goal is to win, whether it's in baseball, basketball, football or any of the numerous sports that people compete in. Having a sports massage can help the athlete get a head up on their competitors.

Professional athletes from all kinds of sports employ massage therapists and they see the results. Athletes see great benefits in having a massage therapist. Their ability to compete is increased. It also enhances their flexibility. The massage therapist will instruct the athlete to incorporate things like stretches, releasing muscle tension and muscle trigger points.

Since there are many athletes in different sports, the techniques are going to be different. The therapist should familiarize themselves with the sport in question. This way, they will know what areas to give attention to.

Massage therapists that are getting into the sports business have to get familiar with the athletes that they will be working with. They can ask questions such as in what areas are they experiencing pain. Therapists should not attempt to stretch any of the muscles because that can damage the muscle fibers.

If athletes have sore muscles, this type of therapy will benefit them greatly. It will help them to alleviate the soreness very quickly. The athlete can move on to the next event or go to practice after they've had their massage therapy treatment. In addition to that, this treatment can help an athlete to get rid of soreness after daily workouts.

Having massage therapy for athletes was probably the best thing that ever happened to them. It definitely plays a big part in them playing their sport. The massage therapists that are hired to take care of the athletes usually travel with them when they go on the road.

They are considered to be part of the team. They provide massages prior to the game and after the game. They also do it during practice days. As long as there's a massage therapist around, the athletes can be assured of playing better games.

It's important for the massage therapist to know how an athlete's body is designed. They need to be able to connect with bones and muscle. They also need to be familiar with trigger points and scar tissue. They'll have to deal with that when providing treatments to the athletes.

The therapist needs to know where to release trigger points on the athletes for a better performance. The more techniques they are able to incorporate with the athletes, the better chance they have of making more money. It's important that the massage therapists are versatile. All of the athletes don't encounter the same problems with their muscles and joints.

If an athlete has cramps, the therapist should allow them to stretch the area against the resistance. The muscle will relax and relieve the cramps. The therapist needs to know what area to hold in place while the client stretches.

The therapist should instruct the client to drink sports drinks such as Gatorade or other sports drinks. This will help the athlete replenish minerals in their system. It will also keep them hydrated. The therapist should also advise them to eat bananas for potassium.

When messaging the athletes, therapists should not use any lubricants. This must be a quick process that will energize them. This will help them to be able to compete better. At the end of the massage, you can use tapping or slapping methods to get their muscles in shape.

Hot Stone Massage

Hot stone massage is important because it reduces tension and relaxes muscles. The hot stone massage is very effective for an increase in blood circulation and metabolism and also beneficial for expanding blood vessels that help in blood circulation in the body.

Benefits of hot stone massage:

Helps relieve muscle tension and pain. Heat has long been used to ease muscle tension and pain. ...

Reduces stress and anxiety. ...

Promotes sleep. ...

May help relieve symptoms of autoimmune diseases. ...

May help decrease cancer symptoms. ...

May boost immunity.

Thai Massage

This massage was originally created in India, but the techniques were influenced by the people of Thailand. It was known as a part of Thai medicine. Monks had even got a taste of this massage back in the day. Thai massage is different than the regular massages. In fact, it is more invigorating and severe than other massage forms.

It is also known as Thai yoga massage. The therapist uses different parts of their body to incorporate stretches that are similar to yoga. Some people have even compared Thai massage to yoga.

With this massage treatment, mobilization of the joints, compression of muscles and acupressure are also used.

The therapist has a padded mat available for the client to use. The mat is placed on the floor. The client gets to keep on their clothes, so no oil is used. The clothing should be comfortable.

This type of massage treatment is used for the following:

- More circulation
- More energy
- More flexibility

- Stress reliever
- Mind and body focus

There are some people that should not engage in this particular massage therapy:

- Pregnancy – consult with your doctor
- Post-surgery
- Cancer treatments
- Rash or skin irritation
- Bruises or open wounds

The massage therapists will be able to inform the client of these precautions prior to setting the session.

The therapist should inform their client to be prepared to be there at least one to three hours. The average massage treatment can last from an hour to two hours.

The therapist will be responsible for providing the client with the following information:

- Get to the facility at least 15 – 20 minutes early to fill out paperwork. Even if you're not filling out paperwork, the client should get there early so that they can relax.

- The therapist should have the health information of the client. This will help them determine whether or not they are a candidate for a Thai massage.
- The therapist should advise the client of any pain or if they're feeling uncomfortable.
- The therapist should advise the clients not to eat heavily prior to the massage treatment.

Prenatal Massage (Pregnancy massage)

A prenatal massage (or pregnancy massage) therapy treatment is for women that are expecting a child. This type of massage is not the same as traditional massages. With this massage treatment, the expectant mother's body must be placed a certain way.

Pillows and padding are used for support. This helps to maintain a safe haven for the mother and unborn child. The therapist will recommend that this type of massage not be administered to pregnant women until their first trimester has ended.

As the therapist works on the expectant mother, there are some areas of the body that they cannot work on as well as some other massage techniques. For the pregnant clients, massage therapy treatments help to relieve stress, joint and muscle pains and reduce arm and leg swelling.

A prenatal massage also helps to relieve back pain. Back pain for an expectant mother usually comes from the extra weight that they carry with the unborn child. This is a good alternative for them because they're not allowed to take certain medications during their pregnancy.

The massage therapist can provide comfort and support to the unexpected mother by applying that special human touch. Not only will they have relief, it can also boost their self-esteem.

In order for a therapist to work in this arena, they should be certified and have training in massage treatments for pregnant women. The therapist will know what areas to work on and make the environment secure for the mother and unborn child.

Reflexology

This type of massage has to do with the feet. There are certain areas on the feet and hands that connect with certain parts of the body. For instance, with the ball of the foot, there is a connection with the heart and the chest. With the heel of the foot, there is a connection with the lower back and intestinal area.

When a massage therapist uses this massage treatment, they apply pressure to the reflex areas. This works to bring health to those body parts and other organs. When pressure is applied, energy will travel through a pathway.

Reflexology can be relaxing and the client should not experience pain. If they do or they feel uncomfortable, advise the therapist as soon as possible. They will work with the client to help them stay in their “zone”.

If there are reflex points that are sore, the therapist will use pressure to alleviate the soreness. If the client starts to feel a tickling sensation on their feet, the therapist will apply pressure to them.

People use reflexology for different reasons, such as:

- Insomnia
- Arthritis
- Sports injuries
- Headaches caused by tension
- PMS
- Constipation
- Back pain

- Stress

Reflexology is used to increase circulation, alleviate pain, comfort feet and provide a relaxing atmosphere for the client.

Reflexology is a supplemental treatment and should not replace medical treatment.

The therapist will consult with the client about their basic health. There are certain things that may not qualify the client for this massage treatment. It's important that the therapist know as much as possible so they won't be put in a situation where the client omits something from their health history.

If the client is cleared to have the massage treatment, they will have to remove their shoes and socks. They have to sit in a reclining chair or lie on a massage table. The client is not required to remove their clothing.

The therapist will examine the client's feet to stimulate certain points and check for tenderness or tension. The therapist warms up the feet by using pressure. They may use a lubricant, either lotion or oil.

After the treatment, the client usually feels relaxed. Sometimes they get so relaxed, they get sleepy.

It's important that the therapist knows how to perform this massage technique the right way in order to get the best results for the client.

Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is a massage therapy treatment that incorporates herbal medicine. This massage treatment using plant and herb oils. Plant oils have been around since Egyptian days. These oils have also been found in countries such as China and India.

In North America and Europe, aromatherapy is very popular. In addition to being used in holistic treatments, it is also used in spas and sold as products such as massage oil and other products that are used for massage therapy treatments.

There are some ailments that can be treated by using Aromatherapy:

- Earaches
- Indigestion
- Headaches
- Flue
- Muscle pain
- Joint pain

The essential oils used are from the leaves, stems, buds, branches and other parts of plants. These items go through the process of being distilled by steam and water.

The therapist uses this massage technique on clients by letting the client take off their clothes. They don't have to remove everything if they don't want to. The client will lie on a padded massage table. There will be music playing for relaxation.

The client will have a sheet or blanket to cover them. The therapist uses the essential oils to massage the part of their body that is undressed. The treatment lasts for about an hour. The client will be allowed to put their clothes back on.

If a client wants to use essential oils at home, they can do so. They have to be under a therapist's supervision. If the client takes them, they will have to be taken orally.

In conclusion:

We hope that this information will help you to better understand the important role that massage & bodywork plays in the wellness spa setting. This information will better assist you with effectively answering clients questions prior to scheduling their appointment.

