

The Massage Challenge .. Agree or Disagree..

By David Hall, Qualified Massage Therapist

Many common ailments or muscle and joint problems that most people assume require a medical, surgical, physiotherapy, pharmaceutical, or chiropractic solution can be successfully prevented, treated or relieved with massage of various types. That's a very broad and generalised statement, but if you accept a few basic "big picture" concepts about the human body, it's easy to understand how and why massage is so versatile and successful.

Think about these following statements and concepts and decide if you agree or disagree with them.

If you agree, then you're a good candidate for massage and there's a very good chance the appropriate type of therapeutic massage can help you.

Competent, qualified masseurs try to take a "big picture" approach to a problem rather than just concentrating on the area where you feel the symptoms.

Grab a pen and mark whether you agree or disagree. (Any reference to muscles may also include tendons and ligaments and associated joints).

Breathing.

Every organ, system, muscle and structure in the body requires **oxygen** (from breathing) to function. The body also needs to expel waste air (carbon dioxide) and other waste products. If the processes of inhaling and exhaling (and other waste removal) don't function efficiently, it could create adverse effects (minor or major) anywhere throughout the body.

Agree/Disagree.

Oxygen and a range of nutrients, dietary fats, proteins, vitamins, minerals, etc are primarily transported around the body in the blood and lymphatic fluid.

Agree/Disagree.

The ribcage accommodates and protects most of the organs and has a VITAL role in breathing. A range of **muscles** are involved in expanding and contracting, raising and lowering the ribcage and



abdominal area and helping create the necessary pressure differentials in the lungs for breathing.

Agree/Disagree.

The ribcage is attached to the spine (vertebrae). If the spine and ribcage are distorted due to muscular/postural imbalances (eg spinal scoliosis or lordosis, hip rotation or rounded shoulders), this may interfere with the breathing processes by not allowing the lungs to either fully inhale or exhale a normal breath, or both. This can also put direct pressure on some organs.

Agree/Disagree.

If the lymphatic (immune) system organs, nodes and vessels can not effectively filter out and dispose of bacteria, viruses, etc, the body may become susceptible to anything from feeling run down and lethargic to allergies, colds and flu, infections, minor and major diseases. The ability to heal trauma such as injuries, cuts, burns and fractures also is impaired.

Agree/Disagree.

Stress is a scientifically recognised cause or factor in many common ailments. Stress manifests itself in many different ways, including tight, tired and aching muscles, headaches, higher susceptibility to various diseases (eg infections or colds occur easily) and a variety of other problems. (Think about the MANY causes of everyday stress in your life - work, family, school, finances, traffic, illness, pets, etc, etc!!)

Agree/Disagree

Tight and aching muscles not only cause pain but can make you feel lethargic, lose energy, productivity and sometimes can have a major affect on your lifestyle and family life.

Agree/Disagree.

the body has an intricate system of nerves - some of them quite long (eg sciatic nerve). Impingement of a nerve by tight muscles can cause pain elsewhere in the body. For example, if the sciatic nerve is impinged in the lower back or buttocks, pain may be felt right down the leg. Or if you get pins and needles or numbness in the hands or arms, the cause of this may be muscle impingement of nerves in the neck, chest or shoulder or even elsewhere.

Some organs (eg bowels, kidneys) may not function properly because nerves that control them are impinged by tight muscles.

Agree/Disagree.

If you agree with the above statement, would you also agree that effective treatment of muscle and joint problems or some other ailments (eg constipation) may involve treating other factors or areas other than just the symptoms (where you feel sore or what would SEEM obvious)?

Agree/Disagree.

Movement of all limbs, joints (including vertebrae, neck, hands, wrists, elbows, knees, feet, jaw, etc) and other skeletal areas of the body depends on contraction and relaxation of the connecting **Soft Tissue** (ST - muscles, tendons, ligaments, fascia and other ST structures. When bones or joints are out of alignment and cause pain (eg in back, neck or shoulders), tightness, weakness or inflexibility in some **muscles** or other ST structures are most likely to be the cause unless there is specific trauma or injury. It therefore makes sense to balance the **muscles** as the first major step in fixing the problem.

Agree/Disagree.

Every muscle/muscle group in the body has an opposing muscle/group. For every movement of the body, one muscle/group must contract while the opposing muscle/s release (even for flexing and extending your little finger!). If the opposing muscles are too tight, the contracting muscle/s have to work harder to do their job and they may in turn become sore or weak. Massage aims to make all muscles as flexible and evenly balanced as possible and can therefore usually fix, alleviate or prevent muscle soreness or injury.

Agree/Disagree.

Some people suffer from tight, aching or clicking jaws (which they assume to be a dental problem). The jaws are moved by a series of facial **MUSCLES** which can become tight, inflexible or unbalanced and can often be treated with remedial massage.

Agree/Disagree.

Proven Benefits.

In **every** one of the above situations, massage has many proven benefits. These include stretching, balancing, detensioning, toning and healing of muscles; improving the circulation of blood and lymph fluid; helping detoxify muscles and organs, and relieving stress.

Massage makes the recipient feel physically better and more relaxed. In turn this leads to improved psychological wellbeing - another important factor in relieving stress and overall healing.

I'd need much more than all the pages in this newspaper to fully explain all the above concepts. In brief, however, don't only think of massage as an effective treatment for just sore or injured muscles or just as a way to pamper yourself. (Some types of massage definitely aren't pampering!)

Think of it as assisting the whole body to **heal itself** or **prevent** problems by helping balance and revitalise all its systems.

Other treatments also may be needed, but massage is a great start.

The Big Picture.

If you feel stressed, seem constantly susceptible to colds, flu or infection, have sore muscles or joints or your body aches, think of the "big picture" of how the body functions.

Try a regular deep tissue (remedial), Swedish (relaxation) or lymphatic (cleansing) massage. One of the many benefits of all these types of massages is they improve the circulation of blood and lymph fluid around the body - and therefore the vital flow of oxygen and other nutrients.

Popping a pill or taking other medication may provide a quick fix, but often only for the **symptoms** of a problem. Medication may be all you need. But in hiding the pain, it also may be disguising the real cause of the problem, so it may reoccur or become worse.

Think back to some of the concepts mentioned above.

Different types of massage apply in different situations. A qualified masseur can advise you on what would best suit your needs.

If you'd like to know more about remedial massage, call one of our qualified therapists today.

