

Stress, Zen, And Massage Miles



Dr. Helen Litovsky

How can I deal with daily stress? Our bodies have built-in stress management systems. The first is our brain. How we choose to react [to situations] has a dramatic impact on our stress and anxiety levels. We can assert our rationality over our immediate fear, take a few deep breaths, and recognize the positive things in our life. We can rationally assess how much real danger we're in, without emotional bias. We also have endorphins; chemical messengers that tell our brain everything is OK. Activities such as playing and exercise increase their production.

What about pain? It's hard to exercise when your neck and shoulders are stiff and sore. Stress releases **catecholamine**, which excites the nerves that contract our muscles. This tension leads to discomfort and pain causing even more stress. It's a vicious cycle many people aren't even aware of because they get used to feeling this way. When a muscle contracts, waste products (carbon dioxide, lactic acid, and acid phosphate) are produced. Prolonged contraction inhibits circulation and these toxins begin to accumulate. If contraction continues, the muscle will eventually cramp and refuse to move. Stress-induced muscle tension can even start to pull your spine out of alignment and compromise your posture. One symptom of this is loss of sleep. There is a huge market now to build a better bed, pillow or mattress because so many people are having trouble sleeping.

Can massage help? Yes! Therapeutic massage is one of the most effective non-prescription treatments for chronic stress.

Can you recommend a product? While basic massage can be done by a gadget or rolling over a couple of tennis balls on the floor, massage therapy is an integrated, clinical treatment performed by trained and licensed therapists (not sold in stores).

What kind of massage should I get? Good therapists can assess what your body needs and provide it. If a therapist is asking what you would like instead of how you're feeling, they're not doing their job.

How can I find a good therapist? With massage, you really do get what you pay for. Good therapists with regular clients work hard and limit their hours. They are not likely to offer discounts. Companies advertising low prices and specials focus primarily on volume. They work their therapists very hard, cap their session time, and even limit the type of therapy they are allowed to practice. Finding a low priced massage is like looking for a cheap dentist; saving \$15 on a massage that doesn't leave you feeling better is not a win.

Should massage hurt? "*Massage Miles*" is what I use to describe the lasting effects of a massage after the session is over. If you're not feeling relaxed by bedtime, your mileage has run out. The effects of a good massage should last well into the next day. The one thing massage therapy should not be is painful. If you have a therapist who thinks "no pain" is "no gain", find another one. Depth of pressure should only be as much as you are comfortable with. You should also talk to your therapist before, after and especially during your session. The more

feedback you provide, the better they will be able to treat you. Never hesitate to say when something feels good or bad.

What's the origin of ZEN Massage? When I started doing massage therapy, I was working on a lot of clients and wearing out my hands. More clients kept coming because they really loved and needed my work but it was very hard on me. I needed a better technique. So we began inventing. First, we added a lot of key stretches to our therapy. Next, we modified our working position to lean more and push less. Our clients can now get very high quality bodywork without wearing out our therapists.

Why the stretching? Repeated stretching flushes more blood volume through the muscle. It increases flexibility, range of motion, mobility, and *mileage*. Stretched muscles stay relaxed much longer.

Do you offer any spa treatments? We focus strictly on massage therapy. It's a very demanding discipline, and we spend a lot of time training and refining our technique. Our goal is to help our clients relax and feel better. Sometimes it takes a little extra work, but we don't mind, and they really appreciate it; in fact, over half of our appointments are returning customers.

Where can I learn more? Do you make house calls? We have a really nice place in Murray. The rooms have a great atmosphere with private showers, aromatherapy, steamed towels, and a very soothing decor. It's an environment aimed to relax our therapists as much as our clients. We simply can't bring that with us to your house or hotel, but we do have a corporate division to help manage stress on the job. We bring a lot of our technique and attitude to the office with chair massage. Call **(801) GO-RELAX** to get more information, or visit www.ZenMassage.net. Our site has a lot of content along with videos, and a tour.

