

Massage & Body Maintenance

February 2013

Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Thai Massage

Movement and Massage Makes for a Unique Experience

A slow dance--that's how many have described the ancient work known as Thai massage, a modality that incorporates the tenets of yoga with massage and mindfulness. Accessible for just about everyone, Thai massage relies on the partnership between client and practitioner to facilitate therapeutic movement.

Historical Roots

Developed more than 2,000 years ago in Thailand, Thai massage remains a popular technique that incorporates aspects of yoga, acupressure, energy balancing, and massage. Considered one of the ancient healing arts of traditional Thai medicine (which also included

Pho monastery in Bangkok. Today, Thai massage continues to be a mainstay in Thai medicine, while quickly gaining a new audience in the Western world.

What is Thai Massage?

Also known as yoga massage, assisted yoga, ancient massage, and assorted other names, Thai massage respects the body's limits, while encouraging clients to reach their edge of flexibility, but never beyond. Thai massage incorporates acupressure, massage, and passive-assisted stretching, where therapists help clients move into their stretch. The work is purposely slow as the therapist guides clients through the movements, being ever mindful of their

The heart is the chief feature of a functioning mind.

- Frank L Wright



Performed on a floor mat, Thai massage encompasses acupressure, massage, and stretching.

herbal practice, nutrition, and spiritual meditation), Thai massage was originally passed from teacher to teacher within the Buddhist temples, while Thai families used it as a healing folk art. Unfortunately, much of the history of Thai massage was lost during the Burmese invasion of Thailand in 1767, although some of the traditions remain inscribed on the stone walls of the Wat

physical limitations. Some say the combination of movements and focused awareness during a Thai massage session creates what looks like a slow, flowing dance between practitioner and client.

Thai massage is based on an energetic paradigm of the human body and mind.

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In this tradition, energy is thought to travel on pathways, called sen, throughout the body. The specific points of energy along those pathways are called nadis. Through movement and massage components, the goal in Thai massage is to ensure energy is flowing freely along these pathways as a means for wellness.

Unlike traditional massage, Thai massage is performed on a soft floor mat. It can be adapted to a massage table, however, for the more frail and elderly. Clients are clothed in loose, comfortable attire suitable for the deep stretching that will be part of the session. This interactive form of bodywork can utilize tai chi, rocking and rhythmic motion, massage, and assisted stretching. Don't be surprised if practitioners use their hands, feet, knees, elbows, and legs to facilitate the process; pillows and bolsters may also be used for better client support. No oil is used during these sessions; however heated, herbal compresses are often incorporated to enhance movement and warm the muscles.

Exploring the Benefits of Thai Massage

As with traditional massage, Thai massage offers numerous benefits:

- Deep relaxation.
- Quieting of the mind.
- Heightened energy levels.
- Improved circulation.
- Improved lymphatic flow.
- Improved range of motion.
- Increased flexibility.
- Rejuvenated body and mind.
- Relief for pain and muscle tension.
- Enhanced body-mind connection.

Experts say there is an interesting dichotomy that exists within Thai massage, as it both relaxes and rejuvenates. After a session, some Thai massage clients report feeling awakened and energized, while simultaneously feeling deeply grounded and at peace.

The Yoga Component

Recipients of Thai massage can also capture the well-established benefits of yoga without actually doing yoga. As the practitioner gently moves clients into yoga-like poses, tight joints are opened, energy flows freely, and breathing is enhanced. A meditative state becomes

part of the process, as both client and practitioner focus on breath and intention.

Through the assisted stretches, clients' muscles become less prone to injury, their joints have a greater range of motion, and their whole body enjoys greater flexibility. In addition to its acceptance among nurses, massage therapists, bodyworkers, and physical therapists, many yoga enthusiasts are finding that Thai massage adds a whole new dimension to their practice.

Conversely, if you're wanting to explore yoga but may be intimidated or not sure where to begin, Thai massage is a great introduction. It can give you a sense of how yoga works with the body, how it's practiced, and how the body will respond. Your practitioner may also be able to recommend yoga classes suited for your needs.

Communication is Key

As with any form of massage or bodywork, it's paramount that Thai massage clients communicate with their therapists throughout the session. Is the massage pressure too deep? Does the stretch no longer feel good? Is the room too hot? Be sure to let the therapist know if something is not quite right so he or she can deliver the best, most therapeutic work possible and you can experience the full benefits of your Thai massage session.

Young or old, healthy or frail, Thai massage offers something for everyone. Whether you're a weekend warrior needing to work out the aches and pains of excess, or a retiree needing to awaken and invigorate an aging body through movement and stretching, the therapeutic nature of Thai massage can address your needs.



The therapist guides the client through the movements in a slow, flowing, yoga-type dance.

Ayurveda-Inspired Body Treatments

A Guide to Get You Started

Ayurveda is a 5,000-year-old healing system from India. The foundation of traditional ayurveda is the belief that everything in the universe is composed of five elements: air, fire, earth, water, and ether, which intermix to form three doshas (vata, pitta, and kapha) that govern a person's body type, mental and emotional characteristics, and personality. Here is a brief introduction to some of the ayurvedic treatments available today:

Abhyanga

A massage performed by one, two, or more therapists working synchronously to bring balance to the doshas, increase circulation, and aid detoxification.

Garshan

One or two therapists, wearing raw silk gloves, briskly massage the client. This vigorous massage increases circulation, energy, toxin removal, and weight loss.

Kati basti

A massage using heat and specific

medicated oils to address low-back pain and rigidity of the lower spine.

Pinda

The client is massaged using muslin bags full of rice, milk, and herbs. This is very relaxing and has a particular and unmistakable fragrance.

Pizzichilli

Large amounts of warm oil are poured over the body while two or more therapists perform massage. This treatment decreases muscle pain and brings flexibility to joints.

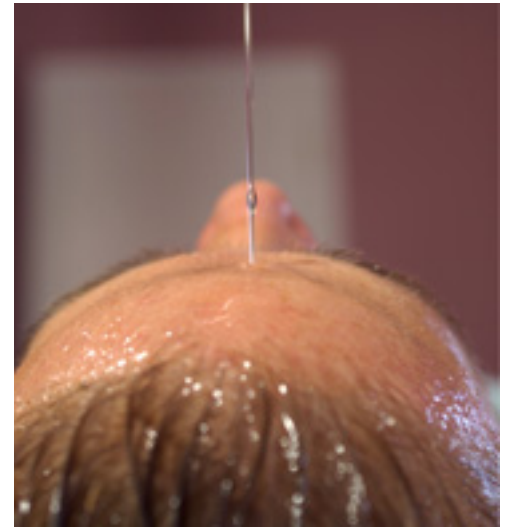
Swedana

This is an herbal steam bath usually given after a massage. It is used for detoxification and balancing for vata and kapha types.

Udvaartana

An invigorating massage delivered with the application of herbal paste, which increases circulation, stimulates weight loss, supports detoxification, and

cleanses, exfoliates, and tones the skin.



Ayurveda is over 5,000 years old.

Somatic Semantics

What Exactly is CAM?

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) refers to healing modalities that don't fall into conventional Western medical philosophy, including bodywork, acupuncture, herbology, homeopathy and mind/body techniques. CAM is becoming a more familiar term as approximately 125 million Americans suffering from chronic illness -- arthritis, back pain, hypertension, and depression -- look for solutions that conventional medicine can't provide.

"Complementary" modalities are used together with conventional medicine, such as utilizing aromatherapy to lessen a patient's discomfort following surgery. "Alternative" modalities are used in place of conventional medicine, such as using herbs to treat stomach upset rather than taking pharmaceuticals. And the

merging of alternative and conventional medicine is referred to as "integrative medicine," connoting the idea of combining the best of both healing philosophies.

CAM is continually gaining the respect of the Western medical system, as indicated by the nearly 100 medical schools now offering courses in alternative therapies. The University of Arizona is an exceptional model of such a school, offering the nation's only postgraduate, two-year Program in Integrative Medicine (PIM). Founded in 1994, PIM is designed to teach small groups of physicians how to integrate holistic modalities into their practices. These doctors are committed to a fundamental redesign of medical education including such principles as: --Appropriate use of conventional and

alternative methods to facilitate the body's innate healing response; --Consideration of all factors that influence health, including mind, spirit, and community; --A philosophy that neither rejects conventional medicine nor accepts alternative medicine uncritically.

For more information and research about CAM, visit the nonprofit Alternative Medicine Foundation's website, www.amfoundation.org.

*Your vision will
become clear
only when you
look into your
heart ... Who
looks outside,
dreams. Who
looks inside,
awakens.*

- Carl Jung

Remember February is Heart Month!

Treat your Heart to a Massage!

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