

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?

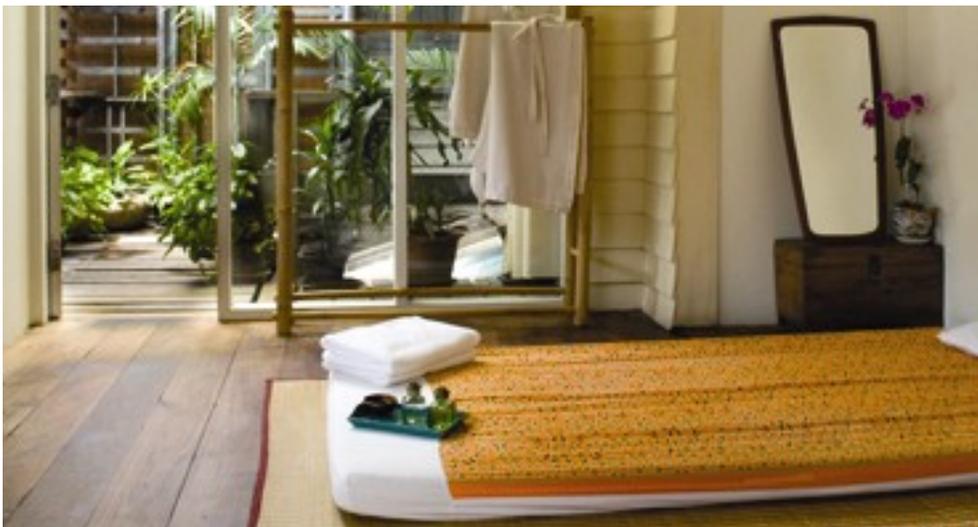
Also known as yoga massage, assisted yoga, ancient massage, and assorted other names, Thai massage respects the body's limits, while encouraging clients to reach their edge of flexibility, but never beyond. Thai massage incorporates acupressure, massage, and passive-assisted stretching, where therapists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

Live in such a way that you would not be ashamed to sell your parrot to the town gossip.

-Will Rogers

Office Hours and Contact

A Balanced Life Center
Desmond Diaz, LMT
(352) 577- 2252 (ABLC)
Mon- Fri 9-5, Sat upon request



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.

Continued on page 2

In this Issue

Thai Massage
Managing Arthritis
Massage for Old Injuries

Continued from page 1

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.

Managing Arthritis

Exercise and Bodywork Keep Joint Pain at Bay

The word arthritis strikes fear in the hearts of older adults. It often signifies aging, pain, inactivity, and disability. However, new research shows moderate physical exercise can actually ease arthritis symptoms by decreasing pain and increasing a person's likelihood of living a normal life.

Understanding Arthritis

The most common form of arthritis--osteoarthritis, or also known as degenerative arthritis--affects more than twenty million Americans. Osteoarthritis (literally meaning "bone-joint inflammation") is caused by wear and tear on joint surfaces and most frequently involves the hips, knees, lower back, neck, and fingers. More than half of people over sixty-five have some evidence of osteoarthritis on X-rays, although it doesn't always manifest as symptoms.

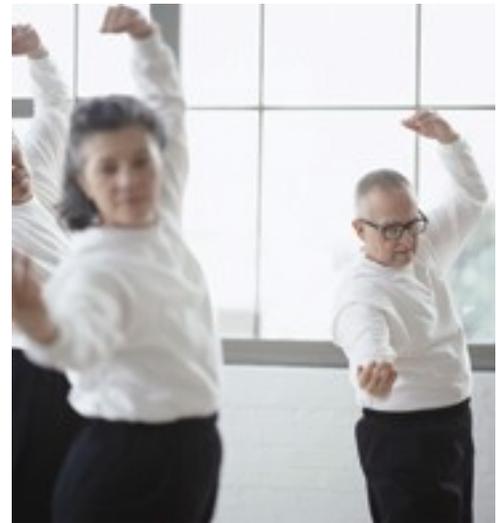
Many problems arise from a sedentary lifestyle. Joints lose flexibility and muscles lose strength, feeding the cycle of pain, inactivity, and more pain.

Exercise Offers Sweet Relief

Vigorous walking, swimming, and bicycling boost the release of powerful endorphins, the body's natural painkillers. When done four to five days a week, these aerobic activities improve general cardiovascular health and aid in weight management (obesity is the single biggest risk factor for osteoarthritis).

Strengthening and stretching exercises targeted at maintaining joint flexibility and muscle strength--especially for at-risk joints--slow the progression of degenerative arthritis. Yoga classes and moderate weight lifting programs are excellent ways to improve strength and flexibility. Bodywork can also provide relief.

If arthritis is slowing you down, get serious with your exercise plan. Consult your physician; work with a professional trainer, physical therapist, yoga instructor, or bodyworker; and start a gentle, progressive exercise program. Your joints will reward you for it, and you'll free yourself from arthritic pain.



Stretching can slow degenerative arthritis.

Massage for Old Injuries

Ancient Injuries Don't Have to Make You Feel Old

Art Riggs

Injuries such as chronic back pain, trick knees, and sticky shoulders are not necessarily something you just have to live with. Massage techniques might hold the key to unlocking this old pain.

Will Massage Help?

The benefits of massage will depend on the extent of the injury, how long ago it occurred, and on the skill of the therapist. Chronic and old injuries often require deeper and more precise treatments with less emphasis on general relaxation and working on the whole body. Massage works best for soft tissue injuries to muscles and tendons and is most effective in releasing adhesions and lengthening muscles that have shortened due to compensatory reactions to the injury. Tight and fibrous muscles not

only hurt at the muscle or its tendon, but can also interfere with proper joint movement and cause pain far away from the original injury.

Therapists who perform such work often have specialized names for their work--such as orthopedic massage, neuromuscular therapy, myofascial release, medical massage, etc.--but many massage therapists utilize an eclectic approach combining the best of the specialties.

It Works!

A recent Consumer Reports article ran the results of a survey of thousands of its readers and reported that massage was equal to chiropractic care in many areas, including back and neck pain. Massage

also ranked significantly higher than some other forms of treatment, such as physical therapy or drugs.

If that nagging injury persists, consider booking a massage. Be sure to discuss the injury with your practitioner: How did you receive the injury? Have you reinjured it? And what exactly are your symptoms? Often, the body compensates in one area to protect another that has been traumatized, and this can create new problems.

Discuss the issues with your massage therapist. (Sometimes just talking about old injuries can play a significant role in the healing process.) Together, the two of you can work to determine a treatment plan.

*Whatever words
we utter should
be chosen with
care, for people
will hear them
and be
influenced by
them, for good
or ill.*

-Buddha

MESSAGE TO OUR CLIENTS

Thank you for taking time to read this newsletter, gaining further insight into the benefits of massage therapy. It has been our pleasure here at ABLC to be able to work with so many amazing people who allow us into their lives and help them achieve the balance they want out of life. Enjoy the articles, there are many more to come.

Desmond Diaz, LMT, NCTMB, ABMP
Owner,
A Balanced Life Center

A Balanced Life Center

2550 Citrus Tower Blvd
Clermont, FL 34711



Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals