

### *Taking control of your massage*

You are in control of your sessions. Always tell your massage therapist what feels right (and safe) and what does not. Your needs may vary from one session to the next. If one technique is not relaxing, your therapist knows many others.

You can choose whether or not to undress, fully or partially. Your massage therapist will leave the room while you get ready, and you will be completely draped with a sheet except for where you are being massaged. If you prefer, your therapist can work through the drape on sensitive areas, or avoid them altogether.


You have the right to ask questions or share concerns whenever they come up. For example, you might ask about massage techniques used or your therapist's experience in working with addiction, abuse or trauma.

If you are not sure what you want, be conservative. A foot, hand or shoulder massage can be very enjoyable and help your whole body relax. You do not need to explain or even understand why you want something. Trust your feelings and you will get the most from your massage.

### *Nurturing yourself with massage*

To be touched in a safe, comforting way is a universal need. It connects us to others, and more importantly, to ourselves. Through massage, you can experience giving to yourself, as well as letting someone else support you. It is a relaxing, rejuvenating and powerful way to affirm that you deserve to be comforted and cared for while you heal.

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## *Massage and Recovery*

*Support for your  
return to physical  
and emotional health*



Are you recovering from physical or emotional trauma or abuse, an addiction or an eating disorder? Massage can support you by relieving tension, improving your physical health, and giving you more energy. It can comfort and support you through a time when you need and deserve care and nurturing. It can also create a safe place to experience positive touch and to reconnect with your body and your emotions.

### *Feeling better physically*

Massage can make your recovery easier simply by increasing your physical comfort. Massage relieves aching muscles and joints, increases your freedom of movement, and helps you achieve a more balanced posture. This can free up energy you previously needed just to move or stand upright. Releasing tension around habitual postures, such as protectively hunched shoulders, can even reinforce positive feelings.

Massage also improves circulation. This helps eliminate waste products that can make you feel achy or listless, and sends energy-producing nutrients to your cells. Increased circulation is especially helpful in repairing tissues stressed by chemical addiction or eating disorders. Finally, massage can enhance immune function, making you less vulnerable to illness at a time when you need all your reserves.

### *Taking time to relax*

On top of the stress of everyday living, you are coping with your recovery. It is vital to take time out, both for your health and to integrate the changes you are making. Taking time for a massage creates a nurturing space where nothing is required of you. You can let the soothing touch of massage loosen tense muscles and calm your nervous system. You may even find you sleep better, helping you feel more rested and relaxed.

If you don't relax right away, honor your response. Tensing against touch may have helped you in the past. Relaxation can be learned over time by focusing on small changes such as pain relief or deeper breathing.

### *Reclaiming your body*

To cope with physical trauma, repeated abuse, or even society's messages about the ideal shape, you may have distanced yourself from your body. You may have areas where you don't like to be touched or you feel numb.

The safe, nurturing and non-sexual touch of massage can help you focus on feeling your body again. It can help you experience your body as a source of comfort. Because massage cares for your body without judging, it can help you accept yourself just as you are. You may also become more aware of emotions in your body, such as jaws clenched in anger or the "warmth" of contentment. This is important information that can help you make positive choices in your life.

### *When feelings arise*

To protect yourself, you may have learned to suppress your feelings. The people around you may have encouraged denial by pretending everything was fine when it wasn't. Your body, however, remembers. Tension you carry now may be closely linked with a painful experience in your past.

Gentle touch can bring feelings, and sometimes memories, into your awareness where you can begin to heal them. If this happens, your massage therapist will support you whether you want to express them, or to back off from them. If you do not have a counselor or support group, you may wish to seek one at this time.

### *Support between sessions*

The positive effects of massage can last well beyond your session. You may experience freedom from chronic aches and pains, and feel more relaxed and "at home" in your body. Occasionally, however, you might feel listless, sore or even sad. Let your massage therapist know. She or he may want to try a different approach in your next session and may have excellent ideas on supportive home-care measures.

In addition, a counselor or support group can offer safe, objective support to help you make sense of feelings and thoughts as they arise. Massage and counseling offer two different approaches that can powerfully complement each other throughout your healing.



