

Body Image

Learning to Love Who We Are

The statistics are alarming. The majority of U.S. women--some estimate more than 80 percent--are unhappy with their appearance. At least 10 million young women, and 1 million young men have an eating disorder. Girls as young as 6 and 7 are expressing disapproval of their looks, and most fourth-grade girls are already diet veterans. Most unsettling is the fact that more women, and girls, fear becoming fat than they do dying.

Combating the Images

How do you see yourself? Are you content with the person looking back at you from the mirror each morning or do you frown in frustration?

magazine covers, others are trying to teach young girls to love their bodies, beautiful imperfections and all. One way to combat the Hollywood hype and to create an appreciation for the bodies we have is through hands-on massage and bodywork.

Why Massage Affects Body Perception

Being unhappy with our bodies has serious, and sometimes lifelong, ramifications. Feelings of unworthiness and self-loathing can set up a lifetime of self-deprecating behaviors. What regularly scheduled massage allows us to do is "get back" into our bodies and reconnect with ourselves. Massage can

"Nothing is so strong as gentleness. Nothing is so gentle as real strength."

-Frances de Sales



Massage can help restore feelings of self-worth and nurturing--key for body image issues.

Unfortunately, many of us are unhappy with the person looking back. Whether it's lamenting about having a pear-shaped figure instead of an hourglass, or exhibiting more serious, self-hating body dysmorphic disorders, body image is under siege in our celebrity-fixated society. While Madison Avenue continues to airbrush photos of svelte, 120-pound supermodels for

help us release physical and mental patterns of tension, enhancing our ability to experience our bodies (regardless of their shape and size) in a more positive way. Just as it facilitates our ability to relax, massage also encourages an awareness of the body, often allowing us to more clearly see and

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Office Hours and Contact

Krishana Hampton, LMT, NCTMB
MO Lic. #2005022445
Toll-free: 1 (866) 258-9830
<http://kindredspirit.abmp.com/>
By appointment only

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identify destructive behaviors, including overeating or purging.

Massage also creates a sense of nurturing that is especially powerful when it comes to poor body image. Accepting the nonjudgmental touch of a trained therapist goes a long way toward rebuilding an appreciation and respect for your own body. If we find acceptance for who we are and how we look, we are giving ourselves permission to live comfortably in the skin we have.

The Value of Massage

Research shows that touch is a powerful ally in the quest for physical and mental health. Not only does it help us be more in tune with our bodies, it can also help restore a sense of "wholeness" that is often lost in our segmented, overscheduled lives. When we regain that connection, it's much easier to remember that our bodies are something to be cherished, nurtured, and loved, not belittled, betrayed, and forgotten.

Valuable for every age and every body type, massage and bodywork have innumerable benefits. Here are a few:

- Alleviates low-back pain and improves range of motion.
- Decreases medication dependence.
- Eases anxiety and depression.
- Enhances immunity by stimulating lymph flow.
- Exercises and stretches weak, tight, or atrophied muscles.
- Increases joint flexibility.
- Improves circulation by pumping oxygen and nutrients into tissues and vital organs.
- Releases endorphins--the body's natural painkiller.

Every Shape and Size

Whether a client weighs 30 pounds or 300 pounds, massage and bodywork therapists are trained to appreciate all bodies, without judgment, and to deliver the best care possible. As in any session, a therapist's goal is to create an environment that feels safe and nurturing for clients, all while delivering much needed therapeutic touch. For heavier clients, some minor adjustments might be needed in the delivery of the bodywork, but its nurturing, therapeutic, nonjudgmental role will remain unchanged.

Through the Scars

We also have to remember that a negative body image is not necessarily about those few extra pounds on the hips. It might instead be tied to the scars of past injuries and surgeries. Massage can help here, too. For burn victims, research has shown massage can help in the healing process, while for postsurgery breast cancer patients, massage and bodywork can reintegrate a battered body and spirit. In addition to softening scar tissue and speeding postsurgery recovery, massage and bodywork for these clients is about respect, reverence, and learning to look at, and beyond, the scars.

Finding the Stillness

Experts say that when the tissues start to let go and relax under a massage therapist's hands, profound shifts occur emotionally and physically. A softening happens, and the brain and body begin

to integrate again. The chasm between body and mind that created the eating disorder, or fueled the negative body image, begins to narrow. In her book, "Molecules of Emotion," Georgetown University Medical School professor Candace Pert explains that the body is the "actual outward manifestation, in physical space, of the mind." She says that if we generate negative energy in response to our appearance, it can eventually find its way into reality.

Self-acceptance, then, is paramount for living well, and massage/bodywork is a healthy path to get you there. Finding the stillness in a massage session allows you to just "be," without judgment. Partner that with the comfort that comes from allowing your body to be nurtured by someone else, and we begin to remember our value, regardless of our outward appearance, or what we perceive it to be.



Cultivating a positive sense of self, from the inside out, contributes to a life well lived.

Lavender

An Essential Oil for Fundamental Health

Laurie Chance Smith

Lavender essential oil is a one-stop medicine chest, helping to reduce anxiety, fatigue, and stress and balance hormones, increase the immune response, lower blood pressure, and relieve pain. To utilize lavender's healing benefits at home, mix five to 10 drops of lavender essential oil in one ounce of jojoba oil or unscented lotion. (Essential oils shouldn't be applied directly to the skin; it's best to partner them with a carrier oil, liquid, or lotion.)

EARACHES

For earaches, dab one drop of lavender massage oil behind the ear and rub gently. Alternatively, place one drop of lavender oil on a cotton ball and carefully place inside the outer ear.

HEADACHES

Inhaling lavender is also effective for headache relief. Add a few drops to a bowl of warm water and breathe. Gently rub lavender massage lotion on the temples, forehead, and base of the neck.

COLDS

Lavender oil can also help break up coughs and clear sinuses. Colorado-based holistic aromatherapist Nicola McGill suggests the regular home-use of antiseptic essential oils such as lavender to help avoid colds and other infectious diseases. Add a few drops to a vaporizer to help clear colds and infuse the home with lavender's scent.

STRESS

At night, six to eight drops of lavender added to a warm bath helps melt away stress and relieve fatigue. Blend a footbath by adding three drops of lavender to a bowl of warm water, sink your feet in, and relax. For help inducing sleep, add two or three drops of lavender essential oil to the underside corner of your pillow.

TRANQUIL AROMA

A human takes 23,040 breaths a day, and each inhale floods the system with scent. Rely on lavender's tranquil aroma to clear the way toward peaceful days.



Lavender is loaded with wellness properties.

Long Live Cells with Vitamin E

Antiaging Inside and Out

A good skin care regimen is comprised of an antioxidant-rich diet and vitamin/mineral supplementation that includes vitamin E -- an essential key to a healthy complexion. Vitamin E is unique in that it's not one vitamin, but a family of eight fat-soluble antioxidants, including four types of tocopherols and four types of tocotrienols -- alpha, beta, gamma, and delta. Alpha-tocopherol is the most common and most potent form of vitamin E.

This important nutrient works to prevent aging by prolonging the useful life of cells in the body. By protecting and strengthening the cell membrane, vitamin E wards off free radical attacks caused by sun exposure and also helps combat disease. This protection is

further intensified when combined with vitamin C. Vitamin E also helps in the formation of red blood cells, protecting them from destructive toxins and cell damage, which also helps prevent skin cancer.

Vitamin E-rich foods include wheat germ; almonds, peanuts, and walnuts; safflower, corn, and soybean oils; and green leafy vegetables. For supplementation, the recommended daily intake of vitamin E is 400 IU. Be aware that high doses of vitamin E (1,200 IU daily or more) can be toxic and cause oxidative damage.

It is imperative that when taking the supplement orally, it is in the natural form, designated with a "d," and not

synthetic, designated as "dl." Mixed tocopherols--meaning a combination of alpha, beta, gamma, and delta--are easily absorbed and a good choice, especially in skin care products.

Topical creams and oils containing vitamin E promote healing, protect cells from free-radical damage, and reduce itchiness--very helpful in treating conditions such as sunburn and eczema.

In addition to contributing to healthy skin, vitamin E has many other beneficial properties, including slowing the progression of Alzheimer's disease, decreasing oxidative stress associated with asthma, alleviating arthritic conditions, decreasing PMS symptoms, and reducing the risk of heart disease.

*"We never touch
people so lightly
that we do not
leave a trace"*

-Peggy Tabor Millin

Have you taken time out for yourself lately? Now is a great time to schedule your, in home, personal retreat. Whether for relaxation or therapeutic purposes...You owe it to yourself.

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- Deep tissue
- Foot reflexology
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Kindred Spirit Massage & Wellness

Wright City, MO 63390



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