

HEALING THROUGH TOUCH

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“The physician must be experienced in many things, but most assuredly in rubbing.” ~
Hippocrates

Hands-on healing takes on many forms, but it is based in ancient practices. It is used today to bring the body and mind to a higher level of functioning, and even to facilitate spiritual enlightenment.

SOME BENEFITS OF HANDS-ON HEALING:

- Better health through improved blood circulation, which supplies needed nutrients to the tissues.
- Inhibited aging through improved lymph flow, which removes wastes and toxins from the body.
- Release of tension and greater emotional and physical relaxation.
- Increased flexibility and ease of movement.
- Improved quality of life and physical health, as all internal organ systems, the nervous system and the immune system benefit through better circulation and more harmonious functioning.
- Mind-Body integration. The body affects the mind and emotions, and the mind and emotions affect the body. Change in one affects the whole.
- Reduction of stress.
- Increased energy. Many modalities work with the flow of energy through the body, to release blocks and facilitate healing. As energetic blocks are released, the person experiences more energy for other things.

TYPES OF HANDS-ON-HEALING

There are three main categories for hands-on healing, although many techniques integrate more than one.

1. Massage is based primarily on modern Western concepts of human function, anatomy, and physiology, and uses a variety of manipulative techniques.
2. Structural–Functional–Movement Integration manipulates soft tissues and/or corrects patterns of movement. The body and nervous system become more balanced, resulting in increased flexibility and ease of movement.
3. Energetic Methods work on the principle that we are energy bodies; blocks in the energy system cause pain and dysfunction at the emotional and physical levels. Releasing the energy blocks allows energy to flow freely, causing a higher functioning mind-body system.

Massage

Deep tissue massage	Fingers, thumbs or elbows apply pressure across the grain of the muscles.
Esalen massage	Slow and rhythmic pressure creates a deep sense of relaxation.
Manual Lymph Drainage Massage	Rhythmic strokes improve the flow of lymph.
Neuromuscular Massage	Concentrated finger pressure on individual muscles is often used in pain control.
Sports massage	Swedish and deep tissue techniques are adapted to the athlete's training program.

Swedish massage	Long strokes and kneading on the superficial muscles, usually in the direction of the heart, stimulates blood flow and improves metabolism. This brisk massage focuses on muscle relaxation.
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Structural – Functional – Movement Integration

Alexander Technique	Verbal and hands-on guidance re-educates body movements, eliminating tension or distortion in the musculoskeletal system.
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Feldenkrais	Physical movement in sophisticated sequences is known to improve posture and flexibility and alleviate muscular tension and pain.
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Hellerwork	Structural re-integration is incorporated with movement re-education.
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Ortho-Bionomy	Structural alignment and balance is restored through gentle movements and postures to release muscular holding patterns.
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Rolfing	The body is balanced and re-aligned through deep tissue work, in which the fascia is released to allow full freedom of movement.
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Rosen Method	Gentle touch and verbal exchange raise awareness of emotional tension being held in the body; the tension can then be released through breath.
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Trager	Gentle rhythmic movements release physical and emotional blocks to allow deeper relaxation, and improved physical and mental functions.
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Energetic Methods

Accupressure / Shiatsu	Finger or palm pressure on the meridian points allow the easy and balanced flow of chi.
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Cranio-Sacral Therapy	Palpations by the practitioner feels and adjusts the pulse of the cerebrospinal fluid. It has been used to treat migraines, learning disabilities, dyslexia, vertigo, and many other conditions.
Jin Shin Jyutsu	Touch on acupuncture points releases energetic blocks and allows the flow of energy.
Polarity Therapy	Subtle touch on specific points harmonizes the flow of energy and enhances the body's structural balance, releasing emotional and physical pain.
Quantum Touch	The practitioner focuses and amplifies life-force energy through breathing and body awareness exercises.
Reflexology	Thumbs apply pressure and stimulation to reflex points on the feet, hands, and ears; these points correspond to specific organs and areas of the body.
Reiki	Universal life force energy is channelled through the practitioner directly into the recipient's body or energy field.
Therapeutic Touch	Hands in the energy field around the body direct and focus energy in rhythmic sweeping motions. The practitioner is a conduit for universal life energy, and consciously transfers energy into the recipient.
Zero Balancing	Gentle pressure on key areas of the skeleton balances the energy body with the structural body.

These alternative forms of healing can be exciting to explore. You can choose the kind that is right for you – subtle, gentle and relaxing, or hard, intense, and dramatic. I prefer intense and dramatic, so I'm about to book another rolfing session!

Karen Brunger is Director of the International Image Institute Inc., and is a Past President of the Association of Image Consultants International.