

Stop Judging Your Beautiful Self

Massage Fits You (yes, YOU!)

Rebecca Jones

Sol Benson loathed her body. It went beyond mere embarrassment at how "fat" she was. Deeper still was the conviction that her body was unworthy of love, underserving of nurturing.

And it was that alienation from her own body that for years kept Benson, a professional dancer who has waged a lifelong battle with anorexia, from getting massage. "I stayed away because getting a massage was being good to myself," said the 45-year-old Colorado mother of two, whose own mother and brother are massage therapists. "If I'm on a weight loss cycle, it's like 'I don't deserve love, I don't deserve food, I don't deserve to feel good about myself.'"

Benson explains, that helped the process. Her nonjudgmental ways helped Benson maintain balance. If, however, Rose had brought up weight, or in this case, the lack thereof, Benson admits it could have sent her into another purging cycle.

Managing Body Image

Benson's story illustrates just how complex the issues of body image can be in 21st century America and just how valuable bodywork is in mending distorted body image.

Developing a positive body image is about becoming present, grounded, open, aware, and unafraid to find what's

Since love grows within you, so beauty grows. For love is the beauty of the soul.

-Saint Augustine

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Self-acceptance is the first step to a healthier lifestyle and a happy relationship with yourself.

Benson credits Mary Rose--a Boulder, Colorado, massage therapist who has developed a special style of acupressure for the physically fragile--with understanding her psychological fragility enough to help her turn massage into a tool for healing, rather than a doorway to despair.

at the core and work through it. It's about being mindful, and listening to what your body has to say--a big step on the way to a healthier lifestyle and not necessarily an easy one to take. It requires courage and hard work to learn self-acceptance. And bodywork can play a key role in this endeavor.

It was the tender care from Rose,

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With America in the grip of an obesity epidemic--while at the same time holding up waif-like thinness as a cultural ideal--many people are worried about excess pounds and the harsh judgments that accompany them. Embarrassment at the thought of uncovering imperfect bodies for the close contact of a massage or bodywork session drives away untold numbers of potential clients.

The problem isn't limited to issues of weight. Many people avoid massage because of embarrassment about acne, surgical scars, birthmarks they consider unsightly, or some other physical deformity or flaw.

"A really common one is, 'I have such ugly feet,'" Rose says. "I always laugh and say that in 20 years, I haven't seen an ugly foot yet. People just have bad attitudes about their feet. In general, people are so self-judgmental."

Relax, Really

Massage therapists specialize in the human body. They don't judge; rather, they see anatomy.

"This is something that's so prevalent and something we deal with daily," says Jonathan Burt, 27, a Detroit massage therapist and massage instructor. "I can't tell you how often I've heard, 'I have to wait until I get into shape before I come in for a massage.' Clients think they have to be in shape before they can relax." Newsflash: Relaxation is not exclusive to model body types.

Given the increased blood flow that results from massage, as well as the benefits to the lymphatic and other body systems, Burt believes overweight people and others who suffer from limited mobility are the people most likely to benefit from a good massage. That's why he especially treasures his larger clients.

The idea of taking your clothes off for a massage is often more intimidating than the reality. In fact, practitioners make draping an art form, ensuring the client doesn't feel exposed. And by the way, says Burt, you're not the only imperfect body around here. "We all have flaws," says Burt, who gave his first massage at age seven, when his grandmother, a double amputee, asked him to massage her stumps. "Myself, I'm not the

American Gladiator. I inform people I have flaws as well, and I'd be more than willing to help them overcome their self-consciousness."

Viewpoint: Compassion

We're all in this together, and your massage therapist is operating from a place of compassion. Your practitioner is there to create and hold a safe space for you. Says Charlie Murdach, 38, a Portsmouth, New Hampshire, massage therapist, "For me, it's meeting the person where that person is and addressing that person in an appropriate and compassionate way."

Murdach, who has been a massage therapist since 1990, says he has yet to meet a potential client that he can't help, regardless of that person's physical condition. He believes this is due to the massage therapist's ability to avoiding

forcing anything, but to also being open to the possibility that miracles can happen.

Murdach explains your practitioner's role: "Whatever is going on with that person, whether it's a deformity or some type of disability, I make sure I can step up and hold the waters calm for that person. It doesn't matter if they're missing an arm, or have a deformed hand, the person who is standing there desires to move forward."

Getting a massage can do wonders for body image and help bridge the disconnect between the physical and emotional. A wounded psyche can lead you to believe you don't deserve a massage; this is when you most do! You are worthy--book your massage today.



Bodywork can boost self-esteem and confidence, and even improve body image.

Magical Mango

Shelly Burns

Treating yourself to a mango is a perfect way to add some sunshine to your routine. A mango is more than just a sweet, delicious fruit. It has properties beneficial to skin, including water-soluble vitamins like B2, B3, B6, folic acid (B9), and C. Mango is also a good source of beta-carotene and vitamin A.

Vitamin B complex delays skin's aging process. B vitamins provide a healthy glow, increased tone, and hydrated cells. The anti-inflammatory properties in B3 help skin retain moisture, alleviating dryness and irritation.

Vitamin C protects against the DNA damage that leads to skin cancer. This powerful antioxidant reduces the wrinkling effects of free radical damage, and combats other signs of aging by strengthening collagen and elastin.

Beta-carotene gives mango its wonderful orange color and has an important role in protecting our skin's DNA. Dry, flaky skin can be remedied with the vitamin A

derived from beta-carotene, which is important for repairing and maintaining healthy skin. Vitamin A has also been shown to help reduce and clear acne breakouts.

Other beneficial nutrients found in mango include magnesium, phosphorus, silica, sulfur, and vitamin E. These nutrients each play a role in strengthening the connective tissue in our body, including skin, bone, hair, nails, and muscle.

Mango is not just beneficial to skin. Its nutrients reduce high blood pressure, the risk of stroke, and the chance of contracting heart disease. Mango also contains approximately 20 percent of the recommended dietary intake of fiber and enzymes, which promote healthy digestion.

Mango is especially helpful for long, dry winters, but you can enjoy it at any time of year. It will help you maintain smooth skin and a healthy glow.



Mango offers a variety of health benefits

The Sunshine Vitamin

Shelley Burns

In the world of skin health, we focus on ways to improve skin quality. We work to prevent acne, cellular damage, dryness, and wrinkles. It is less common to discuss how a skin-care strategy may increase risk of developing other health conditions.

Skin cancer is one example. To prevent skin cancer, we protect ourselves with sunscreen--especially during the summer months. But by using sunscreen we are blocking the absorption of vitamin D, the "sunshine" vitamin.

Vitamin D is fat soluble and contains powerful antioxidant and anticarcinogenic properties that can prevent premature aging and cellular damage. Solid research indicates that

vitamin D plays a role in reducing the risk of cancer, specifically breast, colon, and prostate cancers. Vitamin D has been associated with preventing diabetes by reducing insulin sensitivity. It also improves heart health, reduces the risk of multiple sclerosis, strengthens bones, and decreases the effects of seasonal affective disorder.

Vitamin D can help resolve skin conditions like psoriasis, as it plays a role in skin cell regulation, including cell turnover and growth. Vitamin D can be effective in reducing the itching and flaking associated with this disorder. Ultraviolet B (UVB) treatments have long been used successfully in treating psoriasis because UVB produces vitamin D in the body.

Getting between 5-10 minutes of direct sun exposure daily on the arms, face, hands, and back (without sunscreen) can provide enough vitamin D to meet your daily requirements, though sun exposure does present a risk. Because it is difficult to obtain enough vitamin D through food, many prefer to use supplements. Research on the health benefits of ingesting vitamin D led experts to advise an intake of 25-50 micrograms daily.

Shelley Burns is a doctor of naturopathic medicine and completed studies at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine. She has certification in complementary and integrative medicine from Harvard University.

*Beauty is not in
the face; beauty
is a light in the
heart.*

-Kahil Gibran

MEET THE NEED:

The 3rd Annual Quiet Moments Food Drive:
December 20 - January 22

Bring in 5 canned or non-perishable food items for the following discounts:

\$10.00 off a 70-Minute or 90-Minute Massage

OR

Bring in 3 canned or non-perishable food items for the following discount:

\$5.00 off a 30-Minute Massage

Donations will benefit In As Much Ministry.

Holiday hours: Closed December 24-26 & January 1st
Open Thursday December 23rd & Thursday December 30th

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Member, **Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals**