

THE OLDEST PROFESSION



by Paul Armen Odian

One of my dearest massage friends, Judy Calvert, is the former co-publisher of "Massage Magazine." We share a passion for massage and concern for the industry and have been friends for over twelve years. I can attest that she has a never

ending supply of anecdotes, inspirational, and amusing massage stories. On more than one occasion she has said "You know, massage is the oldest profession." Although contrary to what you may have heard, this may very well be true.

In my opinion, empathy was placed in us by design as a mechanism for the survival of our kind. In some this ability is more developed. Everyone has the ability to feel and perhaps sense the feelings and needs of another. Someone once said that being empathic should be a pre-requisite for a massage practitioner. Some practitioners can feel every nuance of your muscle tissue and joints, always applying the perfect pressure. They seldom follow a fixed routine or modality, their work comes from within them and represents a natural ability that goes well beyond any teaching or credentials from the outside. In tune practitioners have an inner, innate wisdom that is triggered by the needs of another. That's why I often say my clients are my greatest teachers. We are talking about an ability that was there from our beginnings as a human race. I would say that counts for "old."

There are vastly more neural connections between the hands and brain than any other motor part of the body. Our brains are intensely wired to our hands and their movement, the ability to sense and feel, and to exert forces dynamically from the lightest to deepest touch. Although one can coordinate movements of their hands to play a guitar, hammer a nail, or perform surgery, none can argue that these connections are part of our design and are essential to the quality of all our lives. Many massage therapists, myself included, start to become more ambidextrous, since massage requires the use of both hands rather than only the "dominant hand." As these two dynamics merge they become the offering and administering of healing touch. This is all enhanced by our ability to nurture. Nurture is another innate ability placed for our survival and well-being.

So how old is massage? Judy reminded me that animals practice massage. Mothers use their tongues to stimulate breathing and their nuzzling actions stimulate the regulatory processes, including bonding. Massage dates back to indigenous people. I figure massage was

born with the first person who ever had a muscle issue. More recently, approximately 400 years before Christ, there was Hippocrates who is known to be the father of medicine. Today physicians still recite the Hippocratic Oath over two thousand four hundred years later. I had the opportunity to read some quotes from Hippocrates about massage. He called it "rubbing up" indicating working towards the heart. He expressed the importance of working on the spine, and moving gently into the body and slowly out. Hippocrates also said that for a physician to be effective in the healing of their patients that they must be proficient at "rubbing up." You might conclude massage was utilized because modern medicine was not in place. I have witnessed, even with modern medicine, cases where massage brought resolution to people suffering from conditions that had been released by their physicians. It is said that 80% of all diseases are stress related. Massage has been proven to reduce stress which makes it an obvious healthy choice.

"Clearly stated intentions make for a respectful

and professional relationship." It is my intention to bring awareness to the power of therapeutic massage, and help the readers be more particular recipients of this ancient art. The best time to get a massage is when you don't think you need one. Don't be discouraged, there are many styles and massage is unique to the person applying it.

Paul Armen Odian has been called a "healer," an "extraordinary massage practitioner," and a funny guy with a gift for making his client's bodies feel better. Paul gives credit for his ability to feel deeply with his hands and fingers to Rose, a blind woman who introduced him to Braille when he was 4 years-old. He stayed in touch with Rose for many years. Wherever his gifts come from, his clients receive the benefits, both for his touch and his deep caring about their well-being. Paul received his professional license as a massage practitioner from the state of Washington in 2000. With locations in Chewelah and Soap Lake he has built a dedicated clientele whose appreciation can be seen in testimony on his website: www.paularmenodian.com.

Benefits of Massage

Promotes deeper breathing

Improves posture

Improves circulation

Enhances skin tone and skin health

Increases and promotes joint flexibility

Enhances a calm mind

Reduces anxiety

Increases self-awareness

Promotes mental alertness

Increases peace of mind

Paul Armen Odian

Massage Practitioner

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