



Staying in Touch®

HELLO—

This issue is addressing a subject that we all hope to spend little time having to think about—pain. The good news is that massage and bodywork are such effective tools in helping to lessen or eliminate pain from our lives. But since we all are likely to experience some painful periods from time to time, it's good to know that massage is a viable natural remedy to help us to feel better.

According to the Pain Management Research Institute of America, chronic pain is a condition that afflicts some 86 million Americans. A Nuprin Pain Report indicated that 4 billion work days are lost each year to pain, resulting in a financial loss to the economy of \$79 billion per year.

The accompanying article explains how new research is bringing a clearer understanding on the mechanics of pain and how massage helps to counter its effects.

Of course, since pain usually indicates that your body has a problem that needs attention, taking steps to remain healthy can help to prevent the onset of pain. And what better way to contribute to feeling your best than through regular massage sessions? See you at your next appointment!

Massage and Pain Relief

Wouldn't life be great if you could eliminate unnecessary chronic pain? A fascinating article written by James N. Dillard, M.D., that appeared in an issue of *Body & Soul* magazine discusses new scientific discoveries that are changing our understanding of pain—and the way we can deal with it. (One of the reported effective tools for managing pain is massage, so read on!)

Imagine you stub your toe. We've all been taught that nerve signals travel from the injured area (your toe) to your brain where the message is received and processed. This theory seems to make sense, but it doesn't account for many situations—such as an athlete or performer who injures a muscle but doesn't feel the pain until much later. The injury occurred, but the pain message is delayed. And what about fibromyalgia sufferers who experience severe pain with no apparent cause for it?

Scientists discovered a structure in the spinal cord (called a *dorsal horn*) that acts as a gateway for the messages en route to the brain. Sometimes this "gate" opens, allowing the messages to pass through, sometimes it doesn't.

One factor that comes into play with this system is the speed of the message being sent. Dull pain—for instance, a tension headache—travels relatively slowly, from about half a mile to two miles per second. A sharper pain (a toothache or a torn muscle) travels between 5 and 30 miles per second. You may be surprised to learn

that nonpainful touch sensations, including pressure and massage, travel much faster at 35 to 75 miles per second. If you have two types of sensation entering this dorsal horn area simultaneously, the faster of the two will be sent on,

blocking the transmission of the slower one. This offers an explanation of why you would instinctively apply pressure to your stubbed toe; this sensation will get to the gate faster than the pain sensation. In his article, Dr. Dillard states, "Massage therapy can ease muscular pain . . ."



While your body is sending pain signals toward your brain, your nervous system is transmitting chemical messages in response, which can affect the gating mechanism. One of the best known types of these natural pain-blocking chemicals is the endorphin (*which functions almost identically to morphine*). Studies have shown that massage boosts the production of endorphins, further explaining how it helps to lessen pain.

Pain messages are sent from nerve cell to nerve cell, actually having to jump across a gap from one nerve cell to the next. This transmission is assisted by chemicals called neurotransmitters. Two of these neurotransmitters that you may recognize by name are dopamine and serotonin, both of which seem to serve as pain reducers. Other neurotransmitters are thought to promote pain. "When these neurotransmitters are thrown off balance and the body produces too little or too much of them, (see **Pain Relief . . .** on back page)

Pain Relief ...

(continued from front)

they can prevent normal, short-term pain from fading away," says Dr. Dillard. Again, massage can help your body balance the neurotransmitter levels.

Here's another factor: Upon receiving a pain signal, an area of your brain triggers the release of hormones that can bring about an increase in blood pressure and heart beat rate, as well as tensing your muscles and diverting blood away from your digestive system. Sometimes these hormonal responses continue on, contributing to chronic pain conditions. Again, massage has been shown to be an effective means of helping your body return to a more normal function.

You were probably aware that massage could help you feel better and reduce painful conditions. Isn't it good to understand a little more about why it works!

In other health news . . .

Cancer center embraces massage

"...Traditional hospitals nationwide are slowly waking to the realization that massage therapy's positive effects are indubitably quality-of-life enhancing.

"Nowhere is this more clear than in the Integrative Medicine Service facility of New York City's Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, one of the most respected hospitals in the world. The hospital, the world's oldest and largest private institution dedicated to the prevention and treatment of cancer, has quietly added massage therapy to its patient services . . .

"The facility's primary purpose is to help

alleviate pain and suffering of those living with cancer . . .

"Kay White has been a regular outpatient client at the center ever since beginning treatment for breast cancer two years ago. She ... now comes once a week for massage . . . 'I walk out of there and feel like you could drive a Mack truck over me and I wouldn't feel it. I come now to remain healthy, and I can almost feel all the toxins leaving my body after a massage. It's helped my breathing, my posture and I know it's helping keep me healthy. I'm a true believer of massage.'"

—*Massage Magazine, Issue 100, pg. 32*

**Nothing beats a good massage—
Surprise that special someone
with a massage gift certificate!**

**Happiness is as a butterfly which when pursued is always
beyond our grasp, but which if you will sit down quietly
may alight upon you.** —Nathaniel Hawthorne

The greatest compliment is a referral—thanks for your trust!