

# Integrative Reflexology: Beyond the Feet

by Brandi Schlossberg

Seventy years ago, Eunice Ingham's *Stories the Feet Can Tell* was first published. This thrust the practice of reflexology into the spotlight, as Ingham began touring North America, presenting seminars on reflexology.

Ingham was a pioneer of reflexology, and in many ways she built the foundation for traditional reflexology's mass acceptance. In 1993, upon this foundation, a more modern method was born—Integrative Reflexology.

Traditional reflexology involves applying pressure to zones in the feet, hands and ears that correspond and affect the health of systems and organs throughout the body. Integrative Reflexology uses the zone method, but

*Integrative Reflexology is defined as "massage-therapy-based reflexology, practiced as both energy work and bodywork."*

it also incorporates structural alignment, meridians and proprioceptors.

"This approach [Integrative Reflexology] is based on bringing in four major traditions and approaches in reflexology, and that makes it more effective than working one single model," said Rick Rosen, founder and co-director of the Body Therapy Institute in Siler City, North Carolina.

The developer of Integrative Reflexology, Claire Marie



Miller, has been teaching this technique as continuing education at the Body Therapy Institute and in her own seminars across the country for the past 16 years.

"In general, reflexology provides a different way to work on areas of the body," Rosen said. "Integrative Reflexology is an excellent class for massage therapists who seek this particular skill."

Miller is a massage therapist, which may explain why Integrative Reflexology is particularly well-suited to weave into a spa or bodywork session. In fact, she defines the modality as "mas-

sage-therapy-based reflexology, practiced as both energy work and bodywork."

Two core tenets of Integrative Reflexology are to prevent injury among practitioners and prevent pain among clients, while still attaining a full spectrum of therapeutic benefits. These ideals can be very appealing to massage therapists, especially those who have encountered problems with traditional reflexology.

"Sometimes, when you're doing strictly zone reflexology, it's easy to get too much pressure, which can be painful to a client," said Amy Petersen, a certified instructor and practitioner of Integrated Reflexology in Blue Grass, Iowa. "I wanted to learn a form of reflexology that would be more soothing to the client and still be effective."

Petersen said she also was looking for a technique that would not be so hard on her hands. The finger and thumb

"walking" employed in traditional reflexology—and often the source of practitioner pain—are not relied upon nearly as much in Integrative Reflexology.

Instead, the modern method is based on a whole-hand technique, which incorporates the knuckles, fists, sides of the hands and thumbs with support. Practitioners and clients alike seem to appreciate the less-intense technique and sensations it provides.

Another plus for students of Integrative Reflexology is the freedom this modality affords—freedom to create and move within the session, rather than stick with a strict regimen as other reflexology methods often require. This flexibility allows it to blend seamlessly into massage sessions and spa routines, providing for a more creative and customized treatment for each client.

Integrative Reflexology has an array of client benefits, and adding it to your menu can be a business-booster for your practice. A sampling of the reported benefits include increased peristalsis in the digestive system, particularly the large and small intestines; the release of mucous membranes, as sinuses drain and bronchi in the lungs release mucous; uterine stimulation, which can relieve symptoms of PMS; relief of muscular tension in the neck, shoulders, elbows, hips, sciatic area and spine; reduced swelling due to lymphatic drainage; and increased endorphins, producing both pain relief and a deep sense of relaxation.

Another benefit, especially for time-pressed massage therapists, is Integrative Reflexology can be learned in just three days. This brief class time, coupled with all the above benefits, makes it easy to see why more than 5,000 people of all professional backgrounds have completed training in the technique.

"The class [in Integrated Reflexology] here is one of the few that's open to a mixed audience of massage therapists, lay people, estheticians, cosmetologists and health-care practitioners," Rosen said. "[The class] manages to distill quite a lot of knowledge and experience into a three-day workshop."

*For more information on Integrated Reflexology, visit [www.integrativereflexology.com](http://www.integrativereflexology.com), call (919) 967-9015 or e-mail Claire Marie Miller at [clairmar@bellsouth.net](mailto:clairmar@bellsouth.net).*

## The Evolution of Integrative Reflexology

Integrative Reflexology was developed based on my background as a radiologist and a massage therapist. As a radiologist, I became fascinated with the human body because I was able to view bodies from the inside out. This laid the foundation for the internal picture I would eventually use in reflexology.

When I became a massage therapist, I discovered reflexology was a powerful technique, providing both physical and emotional

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benefits. However, with my medical background, I found many of the traditional reflexology charts to be inaccurate, so I began drawing my own.

Once I began developing my own charts, I started an evolutionary process that continues today. Because I was not formally trained in traditional reflexology, I wasn't constricted by its regimented techniques. This allowed me to create a unique style based on massage therapy and my knowledge of the body from radiology.

In massage school, I gained extensive training in meridians and shiatsu, and I easily incorporated this into reflexology by observing the connections between the two energy pathways. Additionally, many of my massage instructors were Rolfers, and the structural work they shared also became an important part of my method.

Today the evolution continues with a powerful Lymphatic-Reflex Detox massage I've developed based on lymphangiograms I performed as an X-ray tech. I also offer Hot Rockin' Reflexology and Sweet Feet Aromatherapy, a blissful and therapeutic application of reflexology that's explored in this issue on page 32.

Integrative Reflexology isn't limited to the hands and feet—it integrates the whole body. It's part bodywork and part energy work, and more than 5,000 massage therapists have already learned how to incorporate it into their massage practices. If you decide to join them, you'll discover Integrative Reflexology is both fun and rewarding, and learning it won't cost you an arm and a leg.

—Text supplied by Claire Marie Miller