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# MASSAGE

ISSUE 308 • JANUARY 2022

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## 22 Trends for the New Year

Meet Mobile Massage  
Clients Where They Are

### SPECIAL

6 Marketing Tasks  
to Quit Now

Activate Your  
Creepy Beeper!

NEW COLUMN  
Business Building

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Create a Thriving  
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We spoke with five massage therapists who earn at least \$60,000 per year. Here, they share their tactics for making more money with massage.

**By Allison M. Payne**

*Can you afford to hire massage therapists into your practice? Find out in "This Financial Plan Will Help You Hire," by Lozelle Mathai, on [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com).*



## 32 Mobile Massage Therapy Offers New Opportunities

As work-from-home becomes the new normal, and with more corporate businesses paying for employees to receive monthly massage treatments at home, this is a great time for therapists to consider adding mobile massage to their service menu.

**By Michelle Roos, LMT, BCTMB**

*Read "This is How Mobile Massage Therapists Stay Safe," on [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com).*



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On the Cover

## A Roadmap for the New Year: 22 Trends

We have, individually and collectively, undergone many changes over the past almost-two years. Standing on the edge of 2022, we can clearly see the general public embracing big changes—shifts in mindset, health-care consumption and ways of coping with stressors among them—that can inform your massage practice and the way you interact with clients. Here are 22 trends in areas directly related to both massage therapy and the larger society. Becoming aware of trends will help you understand what today's clients are dealing with and adopt new ways of taking care of your practice.

**By Karen Menehan**



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### **Total Body Balancing 1: Fundamentals (TBB1-V)**

February 17-20, 2022;  
September 29-October 2, 2022

### **Lymphatic Balancing: Total Body (LBTB-V)**

March 10-13, 2022

### **Symposium for Integrative Treatment of Manual Therapies (SYMMT-V)**

March 22-23, 2022

### **Lymphatic Balancing: Lower Quadrant (LBLQ-V)**

June 2-5, 2022

### **Lymphatic Balancing: Upper Quadrant (LBUQ-V)**

November 17-20, 2022

## In-Person Workshops:

### **Total Body Balancing 1: Fundamentals (TBB1)**

Pine Hurst, NC      March 3-6, 2022

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About the Cover



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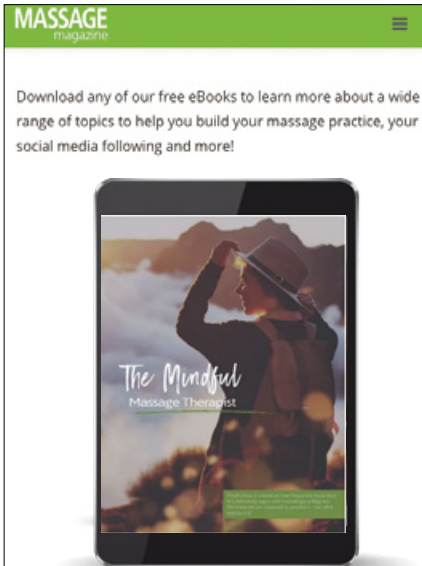
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**MASSAGE 35**  
magazine


**This is How Comparisons Dim Your Light**



**MASSAGE**  
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**Karen Menehan** shared a link. **Admin** 1d · 🌐

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Message News for Today's MT

1 Comment

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- Visit us on Facebook at [facebook.com/massagemagazine](https://facebook.com/massagemagazine) to network with colleagues and be one of the first people to see new articles.

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The information in any article is not meant to replace hands-on training. Readers must ensure they have received adequate training before attempting to apply any technique referenced or described in MESSAGE Magazine.

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**A:** MESSAGE Magazine is published monthly.

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**A:** We are unable to provide complimentary samples. However, you can call 904-285-6020 to purchase single copies.

**Q: Is MESSAGE Magazine affiliated with any associations?**

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**A:** Please visit [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com) and click **Contact Us** at the bottom of the page.

**Q: I have an editorial question. Who do I contact?**

**A:** Please email Karen Menehan at [kmenehan@massagemag.com](mailto:kmenehan@massagemag.com).

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—Robin Valentino, LMT, MMP

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—Steve Matthews, RMT, MMP

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<b>COSTA RICA</b>	<b>APRIL 23-30*</b>
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Denver, CO	June 4/5
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<b>LAS VEGAS, NV</b>	<b>JUNE 20-24*</b>

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Tampa, FL	February 5/6
Orlando, FL	February 12/13
Ft. Lauderdale, FL	March 12/13*
Phoenix, AZ	March 12/13
Dallas, TX	April 2/3
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<b>COSTA RICA</b>	<b>APRIL 23-30*</b>
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<b>SEATTLE, WA</b>	<b>MAY 24/25*</b>
(Post Cruise)	
Atlanta, GA	June 11/12
Philadelphia, PA	June 11/12
<b>LAS VEGAS, NV</b>	<b>JUNE 20-24*</b>
Houston, TX	June 25/26
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\*BOTH LEVELS ARE TAUGHT IN THE SAME WEEK

Levels may be taken separately and in any order.

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# To Our Readers



**A NEW YEAR** gives us the opportunity to look ahead to a brighter future, acknowledge the limitless possibilities for positive change that lie before us, and imagine what we want our lives to look like—and after the past two years of unprecedented challenge, 2022 feels like a very fresh beginning. To help celebrate the new year,

MASSAGE Magazine is teaming up with Massage Magazine Insurance Plus for our first annual Massage Therapist Appreciation Week. Held Jan. 17–21, this week will be filled with daily giveaways, special offers, educational content and more—all to show our deepest appreciation for you and the important work you do. (Visit [massagemag.com/appreciationweek](http://massagemag.com/appreciationweek) to learn more and to allow us to celebrate and thank you!) We appreciate every massage therapist on this planet, including those of you who read the magazine, utilize our professional liability insurance, complete CE on our educational platform, and participate in our social media communities—and our Massage Therapist Appreciation Week is one way we want to express a warm and heartfelt thanks.

Also created for you in 2022 is the new every-issue column, “Next Steps: Advanced Business Strategies.” You told us you want more advanced practice-building articles, and this column by Amy Bradley Radford meets that request. Amy is a massage therapist of more than 25 years. She’s an NCBTMB-approved CE provider and an all-around wonderful human being who is dedicated to educating on the practice and craft of massage therapy. She has written many articles for MASSAGE Magazine on business and technique. Visit [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com) and type Amy’s last name into the search bar to read her articles.

This month’s cover story is “A Roadmap for the New Year: 22 Trends”—and even before I began researching topics to include, it was clear that the most important trend in the massage field is the renewed appreciation for healthy touch that is bringing clients back to your massage tables and chairs. Our society has seen how damaging it is to be isolated from one another and how isolation can create or contribute to feelings of stress, loneliness and despair, as well as attendant physical pain caused by anxiety or trauma. Massage therapy is meeting the need for human connection in addition to all the important body-and-mind benefits it conveys.

As we launch into a new year, the staff at MASSAGE Magazine wishes you a 2022 filled with professional success and satisfaction. Please let me know what topics you’d like to see included in print and online. I’m at [edit@massagemag.com](mailto:edit@massagemag.com).

*Karen Menchau*

# Contributors

Meet some of the contributors who helped create this month’s MASSAGE Magazine



**Angela Lehman** wrote “How to Eat Healthfully — Even When There’s No Time” for this issue. Angela is a massage therapist of 25 years who promotes fitness and nutrition to massage therapists. She trains therapists in healthy eating, exercise and body mechanics to prolong their careers.



**Amy Bradley Radford** wrote “Next Steps: Advanced Business Strategies” for this issue. Amy has been a massage therapist and educator for more than 25 years and owns Massage Business Methods and Pain Patterns and Solutions Seminars CE courses. She is an NCBTMB-approved CE provider.



**Mark Liskey** wrote “Game On! A Sense of Urgency will Push You to Create a Thriving Practice” for this issue. Mark is a massage therapist, massage CE provider and author of “The Pain-Free Massage Therapist,” a body-mechanics strategies and techniques book.



**Melinda Hastings** wrote “Activate Your Creeper Beeper: This Strategy Will Help Keep Your Practice Safe” for this issue. Melinda has practiced massage therapy since 1996 and is licensed in Texas and Washington. She is a Texas Massage Therapy Instructor and NCBTMB-Approved Continuing Education Provider.



**Michelle Roos** wrote “Meet Clients Where They Are: Mobile Massage Therapy Offers New Opportunities in 2022” for this issue. Michelle is an author, educator and a mobile massage business owner in South Florida. She owns an education company and Facebook group, Mobile Massage Mastery.



**Kelly Bowers** wrote “Top 6 Marketing Tasks You Should Quit Now” for this issue. Kelly Bowers is the owner of the Healing Arts Business Academy and the author of three books: “The Accidental Business Owner,” “Can I Deduct That?” and “Between Doormat and Diva.”

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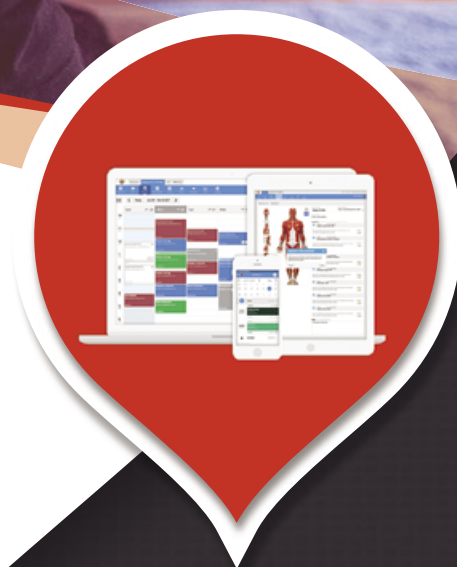
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# In Our Mailbox

**BE HEARD!** MESSAGE Magazine invites Letters to the Editor on topics in the magazine and within the massage profession. Letters should be no more than 300 words in length and may be sent to: [edit@massagemag.com](mailto:edit@massagemag.com).

## Stress Levels are Up

Oh, it's definitely a reality these days with touch deprivation ("As Clients Return, Massage Therapists Vanquish Touch Deprivation," October and [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com)). I hear it all the time and it doesn't matter how old or young clients are.

Stress is at a whole new level, I feel like. As a therapist it feels good to give them what they are missing.

*Amy Jones*

Via [facebook.com/massagemagazine](https://www.facebook.com/massagemagazine) 

I am loving being in a position to offer massage. I can see what joy and comfort being hands-on with my clients can bring. COVID has been incredibly damaging for our minds and well-being. Extremely stressful, and you can feel the effects it's had on people.

*Corinne Welch*

Via [MESSAGE Magazine on LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/massage-magazine) 


I'm slowly beginning to reopen. I've had to completely restructure my marketing strategy and niche market as my practice is inside a psychotherapy collective—the majority of whom are still seeing clients virtually, and as a result the client referrals have also drastically slowed down.

*André Cross, LMT, CNMT (he/him)*

Via [MESSAGE Magazine on LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/massage-magazine) 

I have never been busier since we were able to return to work back in May 2020 here in Ohio. I've slowed down a little since school started, but other than that it's been a crazy good time.

*Nichole Hague Brandyberry*

Via [facebook.com/massagemagazine](https://www.facebook.com/massagemagazine) 

## One License, Many States?

I'm hopeful that this ("A Move to Transcend State Boundaries: Updates on the Interstate Compact for Massage Therapists," [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com)) could encourage all state insurance commissions, along with the federal Department of [Health and Human Services], to mandate coverage for medical massage especially for palliative and hospice patients—and, as a means of delivering non-pharmacological, non-opioid pain treatment


for all hospital patients and veterans for post-traumatic stress disorder.

*Loretta Thornton Dalia*

Via [facebook.com/groups/massagemagazine](https://www.facebook.com/groups/massagemagazine) 

I love it! I'm honored being part of the progression of our industry. Hopefully they'll collectively address the sex-trafficking issue to ensure the integrity of our industry.

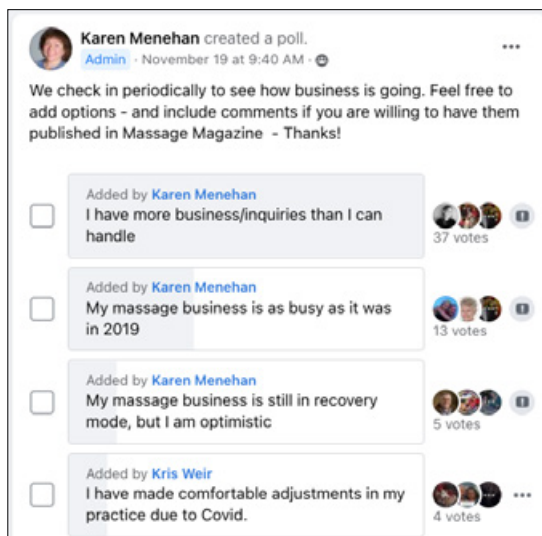
*André Cross, LMT, CNMT (he/him)*

Via [MESSAGE Magazine on LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/massage-magazine) 

I think there needs to be a big stipulation in this to prevent more trafficking though. I'd like to see that if there is *any* record of sexual misconduct (even pleaded down to misdemeanor), that the license is revoked. This is the problem we currently have with California.

*Angie Reiter*


Via [facebook.com/massagemagazine](https://www.facebook.com/massagemagazine) 



## Social Poll: How is Your Massage Business Doing?

I'm literally booked two years out. I had to shut down my online booking website. The business is definitely out there as people are recognizing the importance of prevention over treating symptoms and implementing more holistic methods before reverting to drugs and surgery.

*Victoria Duncan, LMBT*


Via [facebook.com/massagemagazine](https://www.facebook.com/massagemagazine) 

Business has increased from pre-pandemic, and client mindset has expanded as well. Clients appear to be more curious about how massage

therapy and other holistic therapies may be beneficial toward wellness goals. Requests for therapeutic-specific therapies for pain management and ear acupressure have dominated while those who seek the "spa treatment" has faded.

I was fortunate to have had a massage intern who was started with me pre-pandemic and is now an independent service provider alongside me at my holistic studio. We work collaboratively in the interest of clients which, I feel, had helped shape a new perspective of what it is we do in our community.

*Jacquelyne Youngquist*

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// The first client I used it on bought a container on the spot. //

*Terri A., LMT*

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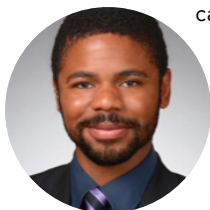
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## A Person's Identity Affects Their Health Care Experiences

**UNDERSTANDING THE TRAUMA** and discrimination faced by fellow human beings can help people be more empathetic and caring toward marginalized groups. This empathy is needed now in as many more people who belong to minorities—whether racial or gender-based—face bigotry and violence. This was one message out of Just Care: Social Justice in Health Care, a conference held online Oct. 9-10, attended primarily by massage therapists, and presented by healwell, which provides massage therapy in hospitals, conducts research and provides advanced, clinical education.

The keynote by Chase Anderson, MD, a child-and-adolescent psychiatrist at the University of California, San Francisco, focused on the impact of identity, how identity affects mental health, what it means to be minoritized, and how health care professionals can identify



their own biases and hold safe space. Anderson spoke of his own identities as an African American, a physician and a gay man.

“Identity helps us with decision-making and community building,” Anderson said. “Identity can be a good thing, but can identity also be a bad thing? The short answer is yes. The long answer is the drive to protect our identity can sometimes prevent us from being open-minded and compassionate and can be polarizing.”

Identity-based discrimination can include physical violence, pay discrepancies, sexual trauma and more—and rates of violence and bigotry have been on the rise since 2016, said Anderson. Such experiences can lead to feelings of depression, anxiety and the need for acceptance, he added.

Also detrimental are

microaggressions, or behavior that can disempower people, he said, and one such microaggression occurs when a health care provider says they aren't prejudiced or don't have racist tendencies. “We are born into a system that is racist, inherently, America was built upon it,” he explained. “We all have biases—it's how do we recognize those biases? How do we become more aware of them? And how do we work against them, so it doesn't impact the care that we give to other people?”


Anderson cited 2017 research that looked at vignettes examining the influence of patient characteristics on attitudes, diagnoses and treatment decisions by health care providers. Thirty-five out of the 42 articles found evidence of implicit bias around age, race, socioeconomic standing, mental illness, weight, disability, gender and more, he said. (Implicit bias means thoughts, preferences and feelings that we may be

unaware of or mistaken about their nature.) “So, basically, there's bias in everything. [Bias in health care is] actually [at] the same levels of implicit bias as the wider population.”

The key for health care professionals, Anderson said, is to create a safe space for people who have faced discrimination—and remembering that's virtually everyone who holds a non-white or non-cis identity. “We educate ourselves, and we need to protect minoritized people and become actual allies,” he said.

Humility plays a big role in this, he said. “Instead of saying “We're right, we know what we're doing”—we actually don't most of the time.” So instead of believing you don't operate from a place of bias, Anderson said, have the humility to say, “I don't understand everything you're going through. I don't understand all the facts about being different. But I'm here to learn. And I'm here to teach myself.”

—Karen Menehan

 Learn more with “Diversity in Massage Therapy: What Will Help Us Create a More Inclusive and Just Field?” on [massagemag.com](https://www.massagemag.com).

## New Massage Therapist Appreciation Week Announced

**MESSAGE MAGAZINE AND** Massage Magazine Insurance Plus announce the first annual Massage Therapist Appreciation Week Jan. 17–21, 2022. Without massage therapists like you, we wouldn't be able to do what we do—and as a thank-you for allowing us serve you, we are giving you a week filled with daily giveaways, special offers, educational content and more, to show our deep appreciation for you and the work you do.

Mark your calendars and get excited for a week dedicated to massage therapists everywhere! Visit [massagemagins.com/appreciationweek](https://www.massagemagins.com/appreciationweek) for more details.

# Legislative Updates

**CALIFORNIA: AB1537**, signed into law by Governor Gavin Newsom in late 2021, extended the operation of the Massage Therapy Act from Jan. 1, 2022, to Jan. 1, 2023, meaning the California Massage Therapy Council will continue at least until that later date to issue certificates to practice as a massage therapist and approve massage therapy schools. After that, the bill states, “it is the intent of the Legislature, in extending the operation of the act, that there be subsequent consideration of legislation to create a new state board and a new category of licensed professional.” (Source: text of AB1537.)

**KENTUCKY: HB79**, signed into law by Governor Andy Beshear in 2021, requires the state’s massage facilities and spas to report therapists who are convicted of sex trafficking or sexual assault to the state’s board of massage therapy, the goal being to prevent predators from being hired by another spa or massage facility. The bill also states that massage therapists may use pulsed electromagnetic field therapy or microcurrent devices if trained in their use; raises licensing and renewal fees; and implements background checks. (Source: text of HB79.)

**TEXAS: HB1831**, which became law in September, requires massage establishments and massage schools (as well as other business types) to post signage made available by the state Attorney General intended to contain information regarding services and assistance to victims of human trafficking, including a toll-free telephone number and url for accessing human trafficking resources; contact information to report suspected trafficking; and key indicators that a person is a victim of human trafficking. (Source: text of HB1831.)

59.2  
%

The percentage of Americans who self-describe themselves as happy and thriving, the highest point in more than a decade. **Source:** Gallup’s 2021 Life Evaluation Index.

## German Company Brings Back Bathing Traditions

**GIANT THERMAL BATHS**, vertical farms and experiential art come together in one company’s water parks in Europe and Asia—and now there are plans to build these parks in locations across North America, including New York City, Los Angeles, Toronto and Dallas.

Water, heat and nature have traditionally been combined to offer a space for connection, healing and relaxation. “From Roman *thermae* and Japanese *onsen* to Turkish *hammam* baths and Finnish saunas ... Therme Group revives this tradition, with an immersive experience that allows visitors to unplug and unwind—giving the time to focus on the beautiful surroundings

and make real connections with themselves and those around them,” reads a statement on the website of the company behind the parks, Therme Group, which was founded in Germany in 1999 ([thermegroup.com](http://thermegroup.com)).


The company’s site states it is dedicated to offering entry prices for any budget. Locations in Germany and Hungary include massage therapy along with fitness programming, well-being food experiences, water-based activities and saunas. The first North American park will be built in Toronto, with an expected opening in 2023 and a capacity to welcome more than 20,000 visitors a day.

## Download a Free Ergonomics Chart

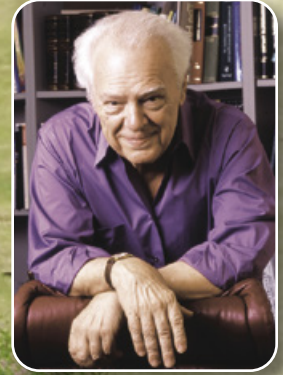
**THE LATEST MATERIAL** to come out of the Massage Therapy Foundation’s (MTF) Ergonomics Project is the MTF’s new Ergonomics Project infographic, “Ergonomic Tips for a Healthier Career,” which is free, printable, and features sections on taking care of fingers and thumbs, improving physical condition, table adjustment, positioning and avoiding overreaching.

The scope of the project ([massagetherapyfoundation.org/mtf-ergo-project](http://massagetherapyfoundation.org/mtf-ergo-project)) includes finding out how massage therapists work and creating a job task analysis. “With this information, our goal is to provide safety parameters for massage therapy work which may include identifying risk factors, examining practice environments, and analyzing the essence of how typical massage therapy work tasks are performed,” the MTF’s project overview states.

Download the infographic at [massagetherapyfoundation.org/massage-research/research-infographics](http://massagetherapyfoundation.org/massage-research/research-infographics).

 Learn more about ergonomics and the MTF’s study with “Ergonomics for Massage Therapists: How Can Your Job be Done More Easily?” by MTF President Robin Anderson, on [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com).

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## Online Learning Workshops

Check website for our local time zone.

### **CranioSacral Therapy 1: Lecture Content; Distance Instruction; Assessment of Central Nervous System and Fascia for Full Body Treatment Protocol (CS1-VC)**

Feb 26 - 27, 2022 Virtual Mountain Time (Denver)

Jul 30 - 31, 2022 Virtual Pacific Time (San Francisco)

For more online learning workshops, visit [iahe.com/virtual/](http://iahe.com/virtual/)

## In-Person Workshops

\*This is a Lab Class. Prerequisite is a 2-Day CS1-VC (CranioSacral Therapy 1: Lecture Content; Distance Instruction).

### **CranioSacral Therapy 1 (CS1)**

Maui, HI*	Feb 5 - 6, 2022
Baltimore, MD	Feb 3 - 6, 2022
Montreal, QC*	Feb 5 - 6, 2022
Los Angeles, CA	Feb 10 - 13, 2022
Calgary, AB	Feb 17 - 20, 2022
Denver, CO	Feb 24 - 27, 2022
Albany, NY	Mar 3 - 6, 2022
Salt Lake City, UT	Mar 3 - 6, 2022
Detroit, MI	Mar 10 - 13, 2022
Asheville, NC	Mar 10 - 13, 2022
Houston, TX*	Mar 19 - 20, 2022
Portland, ME	Mar 24 - 27, 2022
Louisville, KY*	Apr 2 - 3, 2022
Boston, MA	Apr 7 - 10, 2022
Palm Beach, FL	Apr 21 - 24, 2022
Portland, OR	Apr 21 - 24, 2022
Toronto, ON	Apr 21 - 24, 2022
Saskatoon, SK*	Apr 30 - May 1, 2022
Columbus, OH	Apr 28 - May 1, 2022
Minneapolis, MN	May 4 - 7, 2022
Big Sur, CA	May 15 - 20, 2022
Anchorage, AK*	May 21 - 22, 2022
White Plains, NY	May 19 - 22, 2022
Halifax, NS	May 26 - 29, 2022
Vancouver, BC	May 26 - 29, 2022
Fargo, ND*	Jun 4 - 5, 2022
Seattle, WA	Jun 2 - 5, 2022
Tampa Bay, FL	Jun 2 - 5, 2022
Chicago, IL	Jun 9 - 12, 2022
San Diego, CA	Jun 16 - 19, 2022
Phoenix, AZ	Jun 16 - 19, 2022
Milwaukee, WI	Jul 7 - 10, 2022
Burlington, VT	Jul 14 - 17, 2022
Austin, TX	Aug 4 - 7, 2022
Colorado Springs, CO	Aug 4 - 7, 2022
San Francisco, CA*	Aug 20 - 21, 2022

All classes subject to change. For updates due to COVID-19, please check our website for the most updated information.



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# A Roadmap for the New Year

## 22 Trends

BY KAREN MENEHAN

**WE HAVE, INDIVIDUALLY** and collectively, undergone many changes over the past almost-two years. Standing on the edge of 2022, we can clearly see the general public embracing big changes—shifts in mindset, health care consumption and ways of coping with stressors among them—that can inform your massage practice and the way you interact with clients.

Here are 22 trends in areas directly related to both massage therapy and the larger society. Becoming aware of trends will help you understand what today's clients are dealing with and adopt new ways of taking care of your practice.

**1 The Return to Massage**  
Many people spent 12-plus months isolated from most other human beings, which put into high relief the need for nurturing touch. The mainstream press ran with this topic, explaining touch's stress-relieving and immune-system-supporting benefits. Terms like "touch hunger" and "touch starvation" entered the public conversation. And, after what seemed like forever, massage clients returned. According to a how's-your-business-going poll we just ran, most of MASSAGE Magazine's Facebook audience checked off the option of "I have more business/inquiries than I can handle." But throughout the pandemic, mandatory shutdowns across the country presented huge challenges to most small-business owners. Many of you had to find new ways of doing business—from learning new skills to creating passive income and

taking advantage of the many federal financial assistance programs. Massage therapist Dawn Melvin Ramsden, of Colorado Springs, Colorado, sums it up: "I continue to work with business mentors and coaches to grow my business with new strategies, and the results are showing. I began to diversify revenue streams last year by accepting personal injury cases and now expanding to working with veterans through the VA. I was able to hire two part-time therapists and an administrative assistant last year and the Paycheck Protection Program loan helped me get to where I am today."

**2 Eco-Wakening**  
We all want to reverse climate change—especially your millennial and Gen Z customers—and some will make scheduling decisions based, at least in part, on a business's commitment





to sustainability. “Consumers care more about their carbon footprint in everything they do, from clothing to beverages to beauty products,” says Hector Gutierrez, CEO of JOI. “That means every sustainability move a company makes—with real, trackable, tangible results—is going to matter more than ever before. It’s no longer enough to talk about it; you have to show the results.” In fact, many consumers believe brands bear as much responsibility for positive environmental change as governments, according to the World Economic Forum.

### **3 Zoom Face**

We are all online now, meeting with colleagues, friends and crafting groups, or presenting at and attending conferences and board meetings. Along with the uptick in online meetings—in 2020 alone, Zoom’s business grew by 470.33%—has come increased self-awareness of one’s appearance, termed Zoom Face, and resulting growth in facial cosmetic procedures, from nose reshaping and eyelid surgery to facelifts and fillers. “The use of video conferencing apps like Zoom, FaceTime, Google Meet, all allow us to see ourselves much more frequently than we used to,” says cosmetic surgeon P. Daniel Ward, MD, whose practice is headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah. “This prompted many of us to be bothered by certain features of our face, such as an overly prominent nasal tip, a bump on the nose, droopy eyelids, saggy cheeks, saggy jawline, saggy neck.” Why would this matter to massage therapists? Cosmetic surgeons are well aware of the postsurgical benefits of lymph massage and refer to massage therapists accordingly. “One of the most frustrating aspects of recovery from surgery is the swelling that occurs, Ward says. “The lymphatic system is, of course, vitally important for resolution of swelling. I am a big believer in lymphatic massage as a way to help accelerate the recovery after surgical procedures.”

### **4 Virtual Conferences**

Conferences are increasingly online, meaning you can connect with and

**Massage therapists are being encouraged to embrace critical thinking—the antithesis of blind belief in unproven theories, aka magical thinking (“chakra balancing must be real!”)—by educators and colleagues who want to elevate the field’s standing as a form of health care.**

learn from colleagues and experts from your sofa or home office. (We know, it’s not the same as greeting friends with a hug, but you can attend more meetings and save on travel costs with virtual conferences.) “Virtual conferences provide an enormous benefit to the massage industry,” says Jeanette Falu-Bishop, host of the virtual The Massage Conference Live held in late 2021. “Attendees get access to multiple resources at the touch of a keypad. Virtual conferences are the wave of the future in all industries and could catapult professional growth into a new era.”

### **5 Critical Thinking**

Massage therapists are being encouraged to embrace critical thinking—the antithesis of blind belief in

unproven theories, aka magical thinking (“chakra balancing must be real!”)—by educators and colleagues who want to elevate the field’s standing as a form of health care. “At the heart of critical thinking is the discipline of learning to question,” says Douglas Nelson, LMT, BCMTB, immediate past president of the Massage Therapy Foundation. “Over the years, I have learned that the first perspectives to question are my own opinions and ideas. Many, if not most, of the poor decisions I have made in the past came from not knowing what I did not know. In those cases, my confidence was greater than my competence—and nothing builds confidence like lack of knowledge.” Learning to think critically can be uncomfortable and difficult, but it’s worth it, adds educator Jason Erickson, BCTMB, CPT. “It helps you recognize and debunk misinformation, improves your massage skills and client education, and you find it easier to understand how to help people with a wide range of challenges.” Development of critical thinking skills, he says, should be a key aspect of every massage therapy core curriculum and CE class.

### **6 Keeping Up with Inflation**

The cost of massage lubricants, linens, rent—along with food, gasoline and just about everything else—keeps going up. At the end of 2021, inflation had hit a 30-year high, according to business news and forecaster Kiplinger. Instead of bemoaning this, raise your rates to keep pace. This is how massage therapist Jelina Howard of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, does it: “Raising prices by 3% every other year, or every three years, is a standard and conservative way to raise your rates and not sticker-shock your clients.”

### **7 Mental Health**

A new survey on mental health from the You-Gov Cambridge Globalism Project shows that 53% of American women said their working life has become more stressful due to the pandemic, 50% of people in the U.S. ages 18 to 24 say the pandemic has badly

affected their mental health, and just 43% of the overall U.S. population say they feel optimistic for the future. High-profile athletes (Naomi Osaka, Simone Biles) and others are being honest about struggles with mental health—and although massage is not a replacement for mental health care and referrals should be made as needed, massage therapy has been found by researchers to decrease anxiety and depression while boosting feel-good hormones like oxytocin.

## 8 The Spa Employment Crunch

According to the International Spa Association's 2021 ISPA U.S. Spa Industry Study, consumer demand for spa services is up, but staffing of key positions, including massage, is way, way down: More than 36,000 service providers down. If you ever considered working in a spa, now might be the time to make that move. One innovative staffing solution, Spa Space, has grown more than 100% over the past few months, with over 1,000 service providers now signed up. The platform matches workers with open spa treatment rooms—so you can enjoy working in a spa environment while holding onto your independence.

## 9 Mindfulness

What will keep you focused on the present moment rather than freaked out about the future? Mindfulness, a practice developed through meditation, breathwork and remembering to be here now. Mindfulness has been seen as an antidote to modern stressors for many years—but has taken on a larger significance due to the pandemic, political strife and growing unease about what may come. “The almost unfathomable upheavals of the global pandemic have been an ongoing reminder of the fragility of our lives; we have felt, again and again, how hopes and plans and expectations can be dashed without warning,” says educator and author David M. Lobenstine, LMT. “As a result, the gift that mindfulness gives—a reminder to remain in the present moment—is more valuable than ever.” Practicing mindfulness during a massage

session can be particularly powerful, he adds. “When we become aware of the rise and fall of our own breath—when we notice our wandering thoughts without judgement and bring our attention back to the next exhalation—then we provide a template for the client to do the same and feel more at ease in their own body and brain and breath.”

## 10 The U.S. Sleep Deficient

Thirty percent of U.S. adults now suffer from insomnia and 10% suffer from chronic insomnia, according to the American Sleep Association, a trend that won't be put to bed soon. “The past couple of years knocked millions of people out of the routines they'd grown used to,” says Certified Sleep Science Coach Stephen Light. “With all of the extra hours at home and with routines thrown out of whack, sleep schedules suffered.” The drastic rise in average screen time—especially before

increased interest in physical fitness, lessened stress, healthy nutrition and a strengthened immune system (altogether, wellness). “When so much feels out of our control, it's important to focus on what we can control, says Nicholas Vasiliou of BioHealth Nutrition. “Many consumers are noting that and taking back control of their diets and exercise regimens.” According to MINDBODY's 2021 Wellness Index, a survey of U.S. consumers, people are embracing wellness for several reasons: 62% of respondents said they are doing so to reduce stress, while 60% said “the pandemic has made me realize that I need to be healthier to withstand disease/illness.” Massage therapists can tap into the wellness trend by marketing healthy touch as a component of preventative health and well-being. More specifically: massage therapy relieves pain, and pain can have a significant immunosuppressive effect on the human body.

# A 2021 study from Mercer found that 70% of companies plan to adopt a hybrid model of work, and a FlexJobs survey found that almost 60% of employees want to work remotely all the time.

bed—threw a wrench into sleep hygiene, among other behaviors, Light says. “Stress rose alongside the uncertainty and upheaval in our world, which certainly didn't help anyone get a good night's sleep either.” And what is great for stress relief and self-connection? Massage, of course.

## 11 Wellness as a Superpower

People are realizing the importance of prioritizing their health—in large part to create resistance to viruses including COVID-19 and flu—fueling

## 12 Remote Work

Millions of Americans now work from home. A 2021 study from Mercer found that 70% of companies plan to adopt a hybrid model of work, and a FlexJobs survey found that almost 60% of employees want to work remotely all the time. To find out what that trend could mean for your massage practice, turn to page 32 in this issue to read “Meet Clients Where They Are: Mobile Massage Therapy Offers New Opportunities.”

## 13 The Push for Diversity & Inclusion

When it comes to patronizing businesses, U.S. consumers increasingly prioritize those that show a commitment to diversity—making diversity not only an ethical choice, but one that is good for your bottom line. The people seeking massage experiences come from various cultures, ethnicities, religions, gender identification, locations and age groups,

need to see,” explains Baker. “It has been very exciting and refreshing to see many members of our profession come together in dedication to this cause, however, we have a way to go to get every stakeholder at every level genuinely invested in these initiatives for the long-term.” We know that mental health and well-being are already challenged in these times of uncertainty, says Baker, adding, “imagine the effect of [perceived] inadequacy, rejection and not belonging on top of it.”

“I am constantly trying to help clients unlearn the idea that ‘deep’ pressure and ‘firm’ pressure are the same thing, that ‘knots’ are a thing, that harder pressure is better, and that [massage] has to hurt to feel better.”

explains spa educator Sherrie Tennessee. “As there is diversity in massage clients, the same should and needs to be reflected in the massage therapists providing those experiences,” she says. Yet just 8% of massage therapists are Black professionals compared with 64% of practitioners being white, for example. One group working to grow diversity and inclusion in the massage and spa field is the Network of Multicultural Spa and Wellness Professionals, founded and led by Toshiana Baker. NMSWP is dedicated to the education, support and growth of underrepresented and marginalized spa and wellness professionals. Diversity, Baker says, is essential to the continued evolution of the massage industry—and inclusion, which is the feeling of belonging and active initiatives to support belonging instead of performative and superficial initiatives, is just as important. “These initiatives need to be implemented from the student-level experience all the way to top executive leadership roles in order to truly be the change we desperately

## 14 Touchless Treatments

During 2020, spas and franchises implemented no-touch treatments to reduce stress while accommodating customers’ fear of close contact. Many of those treatments are raking in big bucks at large businesses—and massage therapists with enough session-room space can also consider offering such touchless treatments as sauna, hot water immersion, LED therapy—or even a specialized treatment table wired for quantum harmonic sound therapy.

## 15 Educated (With Your Help) Clients

Online chatter and social posts reflect a growing focus on the part of massage therapists on client education. Heather L. Ash, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is one massage therapist who educates clients while she works. “I am constantly trying to help clients unlearn the idea

that ‘deep’ pressure and ‘firm’ pressure are the same thing, that ‘knots’ are a thing, that harder pressure is better, and that [massage] has to hurt to feel better.” Other client-education topics? Stretching between sessions and understanding that regular massage is part of a regular wellness program.

## 16 Body Love

The isolation engendered by COVID-19-related restrictions fueled disordered eating behavior—and with the relaxation of restrictions, diet culture came roaring back, says registered dietitian nutritionist Lauren MacLeod, RD. “Every wellness influencer seemed to be touting ways to kick COVID weight gain,” she said. Providing a counterbalance is the body positive movement, with messages about loving your body as it is, moving joyfully and eating mindfully. “People are tired of diet culture dictating their lives ... the core value of [the body-positive] movement is to accept your body as it is and encourage balanced lifestyle choices,” says MacLeod. “Health is not determined by weight, but rather by these small, consistent changes, such as eating all foods in balance (intuitive eating), participating in mindful and enjoyable movement, sleeping well and caring for your mental health.”

## 17 The COVID-19 Survivor on Your Table

As many as one-third of all Americans have been infected with COVID-19, according to Columbia University researchers. One review of 57 studies comprising more than 250,000 survivors indicates 50% of COVID-19 survivors may suffer from ongoing symptoms ranging from mild to debilitating—fatigue, headaches, breathing difficulties, coughing, heart palpitations, joint or muscle pains, loss of taste and smell, digestive issues, mood changes, dizziness and brain fog, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—for six months or longer. “While massage therapy cannot always help alleviate such symptoms, there are several that can

be helped with massage,” says medical massage therapist David Weintraub, LMT, who wrote on this topic for [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com). “The obvious ones to look out for are joint-and-muscle pain and headaches. Clients presenting with these conditions are very likely to find relief with massage therapy. Breathing difficulties, coughing, digestive issues, dizziness and brain fog may also be helped.”

## 18 Sanitation+

Clients are very aware now of sanitation protocols and expect impeccable cleanliness. One national poll of massage therapists shows that almost 90% of you are undertaking more thorough cleaning and sanitation procedures than before. That’s good: According to MINDBODY’s State of the Spa and Salon Industry Report 2021, 36% of germ-wary consumers say cleanliness is the most important factor when visiting a salon or spa.

## 19 Ongoing Trauma

With what we have all been through since early 2020—racial discord, political upheaval,

and the grief of 800,000 lives lost to COVID-19 in the U.S. alone, you can expect to see more people on your table who present with trauma. The American Psychological Association defines trauma as an emotional response to a terrible event, with long-term reactions to trauma possibly including unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. Massage therapist and educator Jimmy

Gialelis, LMT, sees clients presenting with trauma in his Tempe, Arizona, practice. “These individuals display great strength and fortitude,” he says. “Their bodies have taught me many lessons. They often share their stories with me. As I listen actively, their words resonate a spirit of hope. They trust they will receive healing within our sessions together.” One key principle when working with trauma clients is to remember that the client will not benefit from therapy of

and the grief of 800,000 lives lost to COVID-19 in the U.S. alone, you can expect to see more people on your table who present with trauma. The American Psychological Association defines trauma as an emotional response to a terrible event, with long-term reactions to trauma possibly including unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. Massage therapist and educator Jimmy

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- Manual Therapy to Eliminate Multiple Nerve Compression Patterns of the Upper Body
- Manual Therapy to Eliminate Multiple Nerve Compression Patterns of the Lower Body
- Kinetic Chain Patterns for Complicated Shoulder Conditions, Part 1
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Jan 22-23	Kinetic Chain Patterns for Comp Shoulder	Pottstown, PA
Feb 5-6	Multiple Nerve Compression Upper/Lower	San Diego, CA
Feb 26-27	Kinetic Chain Patterns for Comp Shoulder	Tinley Park, IL
Mar 5-6	Lower Body Seminar	Ashville, NC
Mar 11-13	AMTA Missouri	St. Charles, MO
Mar 18-19	AMTA Delaware	Dewey Beach, MD
Mar 26-27	AMTA Iowa	Cedar Falls, IA
Mar 31-Apr 3	AMTA Texas	League City, TX
Apr 9-10	Nerve Compression Patterns Upper/Lower	Suwanee, GA





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“I do my best to create a safe, neutral environment in which trauma clients can relax and experience their session fully. Ambiance of my room, music selected, quality of touch, comfort level of client and warm aesthetics are all factors I consciously check before working with trauma clients to ensure they can experience a parasympathetic state upon my table.”

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any sort—massage, physical, counseling, psychiatry—until their body is moved into a parasympathetic state, Gialelis says. “I do my best to create a safe, neutral environment in which trauma clients can relax and experience their session fully. Ambiance of my room, music selected, quality of touch, comfort level of client and warm aesthetics are all factors I consciously check before working with trauma clients to ensure they can experience a parasympathetic state upon my table.” West Haven, Connecticut, massage therapist Tina Marie, LMT, also specializes in trauma- and anxiety-related conditions. “Bodywork for some can be very daunting, and as bodyworkers we are working bottom up—body to mind connections,” she says. “Having a better understanding and education on the mind, handling and knowing differences of shock, trauma and stress, can greatly improve a bodywork experience for those suffering great anxiety, phobia, panics, depression—the list is long.”

**20 Pain Brain**  
A growing body of research supports the biopsychosocial model of pain—meaning pain sensations are created with input from the brain and also modified based on memories, past experiences and other social phenomena.

Noteworthy for massage therapists is the language used to describe one’s feelings, including pain. “I’ve noticed a common factor in clients with chronic pain,” says bodyworker and educator Anna Lunaria, who wrote on this topic on [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com). “These clients often begin their sessions characterizing their pain in pejorative terms, such as ‘This is my bad hip’; ‘I’m a train wreck’; or ‘I’m all twisted


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“It can be beneficial to offer a CBD massage session to attract those consumers looking for creative and effective ways to utilize CBD for pain management.”

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up.’ Shifting their relationship with their body through mindful language choices is pivotal in addressing their chronic pain and their relationship with their body.”

**21 CBD**  
Cannabidiol from hemp, or CBD, is big business; all 50 states have legalized its use in one form or another (check your regulations before offering CBD massage). “Research is indicating that CBD, when applied topically, may function like capsaicin, provide many of the same therapeutic benefits of capsaicin for the treatment of arthritis and nerve pain but be much more pleasant to use,” says Jeffrey Cullers, DC, vice president of Premier US Hemp. “When other ingredients like menthol, essential oils and herbs are added to CBD, it may promote the effectiveness of CBD.” People want to incorporate CBD treatments into their wellness plans, says Pamela Heavner, key opinion leader for Charlotte’s Web. “It can be beneficial to offer a CBD massage session to attract those consumers looking for creative and effective ways to utilize CBD for pain management.” CBD topicals can be a great way to earn extra income, as clients can take advantage of the convenience of purchasing from their massage therapist after receiving a pain-relieving CBD massage session, Heavner adds. “The added income makes this a win-win for both the therapist and the client.”

**22 You Tell Us**  
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Karen Menehan is MASSAGE Magazine’s editor in chief, print and digital. Reach her at [edit@massagemag.com](mailto:edit@massagemag.com).

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## 5 Massage Therapists Share the Strategies They Use to Earn to an Above-Average Income

By Allison M. Payne

AS A MASSAGE THERAPIST, you know how much your massage therapy work is worth—but are you being rewarded for your talent and expertise in the form of big paychecks? Chances are, even though you're already working hard, your income could use a boost.



Edward Miano, LMT

“You can only work so many hours and you can only work on one person at a time, so success in massage is in a sense self-limiting,” said Edward Miano, LMT, owner of Healing Hands



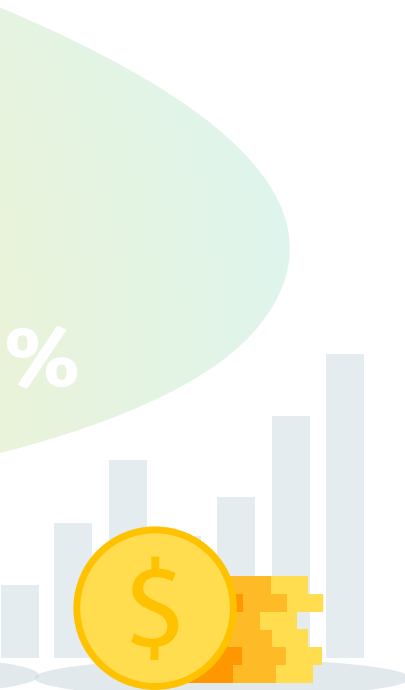
Kimberly Gregorzek-Medeiros, LMT, BCTMB

### First, Forget About Discounts

Most of the therapists we spoke with for this article had a general consensus about discounts: If you offer a high-quality massage and good customer service, you don't need them. “When you give people value, they're happy to spend their money on you,” said Kimberly Gregorzek-Medeiros, LMT, BCTMB, owner of Ocean Essence,

Bodywork in Boston, Massachusetts. “You can book yourself to death or you can charge more, but at some point everybody reaches a maximum ceiling.”

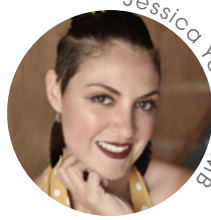
We spoke with several high-earning massage therapists who have broken through that ceiling and asked them to share some of their secrets with you. To connect with high earners, MASSAGE Magazine put a call out on social media asking for input from massage therapists who make \$60,000 or more net income per year. Five of the people who answered that call are interviewed here. Try one of their make-more-money strategies to transform your business in 2022.



Michael Stechly

Michael Stechly, owner of Michael Stechly Wellness in Chicago, for example, tacks on \$25 extra if he has to travel outside a four-mile radius of his home. He also makes small rate increases each year to account for inflation.

Jessica York, BCTMB, owner of Breathe Bodywork in St. Clair Shores, Michigan, considered the competition when setting rates in her practice. “I was very cautious,” she said. “I looked at the menus of approximately 20 to 30 other places offering massage at the time, and their service offering types, and I kept my prices \$5 under ... and I think that gave me an advantage because at the end of the day, for a lot of people, even if they have the best therapist on the planet, you still have to be able to afford to go to that therapist.”



Jessica York, BCTMB

When Gregorzek-Medeiros bought her business, it came with a client list; when business was slow, she tried to get those clients back in the door by calling each one of them personally—and her strategy paid off.

**Introduce Yourself**

“I had time because my phone wasn’t ringing yet,” she noted. “I reached out to each one of those individually and introduced myself, told them [the practice was] under new ownership and I have this whole new vision and that I’d like to welcome them to check us out. [It] cost me nothing to start getting clients in the door.”



Neal Tinney, EMT-P, LMT

Stechly also believes in the power of the personal touch, and makes a point of calling potential clients he’s met at events; he says he has a 90% success rate with getting those clients to book a massage. Also, he works in a private health club and uses their membership list to contact potential clients and offer his services.

“I create a rotating cold-call schedule, so I don’t call too many people and annoy them, but in six years of me being there,

I’ve never once had someone pick up the phone and say, ‘How dare you cold-call me to check up on my health and wellness?’ he said. In his experience, he added, most clients appreciate the calls.

**Stechly also believes in the power of the personal touch, and makes a point of calling potential clients he’s met at events; he says he has a 90% success rate with getting those clients to book a massage.**

**Target Tourism**

Miano spends his summers on Martha’s Vineyard, which gets about 150,000 tourists per year during the summer months. In such a place, massage is in high demand and he can easily charge higher rates for his work. An added bonus? He gets to spend his summer at the beach.

“I have three to four months of the year where the fees are very good and the work is very enjoyable,” Miano says of his summer sessions, which sometimes even take place on the beach or on clients’ boats.

**Earn Another Credential**

“I really recommend diversifying your trade portfolio as much as possible,” says York, who is licensed as a massage

which offers massage therapy, skin care and wellness services in North Kingstown, Rhode Island.

Bargain sites, such as Groupon, can be a good way to get first-time clients in your door, but it’s possible they will remain one-time clients; many people use Groupon to search for deals and won’t return to your practice if it means paying full price.

However, Neal Tinney, EMT-P, LMT, owner of Massageology LLC in Middleburg, Florida, says Groupon has been good for his business: “It’s brought a lot of people into our practice that may have never come in before,” he said.

**Raise Your Rates (Within Reason)**

If you charge more per massage, you’ll make more money—provided you’re in a market where people will have the money to pay higher rates. You don’t have to have just one rate, either; you may want to charge one rate in your studio and a higher rate for outcalls.

“Find something you love.... so many therapists want to keep accumulating new skills and they just keep adding.”

therapist and a cosmetologist.

Prior to becoming a massage therapist, Stechly already had a degree in culinary arts, and uses healthy cooking as part of his business, targeting high-end clients in the Chicago area. “I am a personal chef and I do private parties and events,” he said.

### Offer Membership

York offers a membership model with a twist—clients who leave her two reviews online become “VIPs,” who then receive perks such as a discounted rate, a free half-hour massage or facial on their birthday, and other VIP-only specials and perks. Her clients were thrilled, she says, and her business started ranking higher in web searches.

### Teach

Miano teaches a couple’s massage class that he says has been “amazingly successful.” The class involves a three- or four-hour commitment, but he sometimes makes the equivalent of a whole day’s worth of massage sessions—without actually having to do any massage himself.

“The work is much less strenuous on my body because [the clients are] by and large working on each other,” he explains.

### Specialize

“Find something you love.... so many therapists want to keep accumulating new skills and they just keep adding,” said Miano.

Is there a technique you practice that no one else in town offers? Use that to attract clients. For example, York became the only therapist in her area to offer bamboo massage, and also distinguishes herself by running a spa that is all vegan.

### Quit Wasting Space

When Gregorzek-Medeiros opened her business, only one room was being used as a treatment room, while the other was used for storage. She moved out the items and added a massage table, and was able to hire another massage therapist to use the room for sessions. She also added an infrared sauna in an “awkward corner” of her practice space.

“Don’t have wasted space,” she says. “Lounges are great, but if no one’s sitting in them, put a table in there and make some money.”

### Be Great, and Be Yourself

York says potential clients gravitate toward honesty and authenticity, which you can communicate via social media.

“People want to see what’s behind

the scenes. They want to see what’s real. And so being really authentic on social media and utilizing things like your local Facebook and community forums and reaching out, introducing yourself, making those grassroots marketing connections—that’s what’s going to really set you apart from everybody else, because they’re going to want to visit your business instead of going to just their local massage franchise,” she said. “They’re going to want to support your endeavor because of you, who you are as a person.”

### Wait, Watch ... and Make Your Move


Gregorzek-Medeiros had been working as an independent contractor for the owner of a practice and had earned as many raises as it was possible for her to get; it was then she decided to make the jump into owning her own practice.

Buying a wellness business circa 2008 could have been a disaster in the downturned economy that marked that time period, but she had been saving her money to strike out on her own and saw her chance. She bought a spa that was failing, turned it around and made money despite the recession.

“I changed the model of the business, added the words therapeutic massage to the title, started networking with local fitness professionals and chiropractors and anybody that was in wellness to start to send me clients,” she said.

“When everyone else doesn’t see an opportunity, that’s your chance.” **M**

**Allison M. Payne** is an independent writer, editor and proofreader in central Florida. Her articles for *MASSAGE Magazine* include “Massage in Physical Rehabilitation: A Focus on Clients’ Comeback” (November) and “This is What We Know About Long-Haul COVID-19 Survivors” ([massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com)).

 Is it time to expand? Find out in “the Guide to Hiring Massage Therapists for Your Practice,” by Lozelle Mathai, on [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com).

“Don’t have wasted space. Lounges are great, but if no one’s sitting in them, put a table in there and make some money.”

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Author Michelle Roos runs a thriving mobile-massage practice and teaches mobile-massage success strategies.



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# Meet Clients Where They Are

## Mobile Massage Therapy Offers New Opportunities

By Michelle Roos, LMT, BCTMB

**MOBILE MASSAGE IS** the delivery of massage therapy treatment, where the massage therapist delivers on-site treatment at the client's home, office or another preferred location. Despite the devastating impact of the pandemic and its effects on a great many people, it has provided something of a silver lining for therapists who offer mobile massage therapy.

In speaking with many clinic-based massage therapists and their clients, I found there has been an enormous increase in requests for massage to be provided in clients' homes. As we know, since the pandemic began, many people have begun working from home. Many other people have had to be confined to their home because either they are considered high-risk or want to limit their exposure to fewer individuals. As the pandemic has progressed, clients have reported feeling safer and more comfortable within their own space versus seeking treatment elsewhere.

Many companies still provide their employees the option to work remotely, and many employees happily do so. According to a study from Mercer, 70% of companies said they were planning to adopt a hybrid work model, meaning some office work combined with home-based work. Another study from FlexJobs showed that 58% of respondents report wanting to be full-time remote employees post-pandemic, while 39% want a hybrid work environment.

Some corporate businesses will pay for their employees to receive monthly massage treatments at home as an added benefit—making this a great time for therapists to consider adding mobile massage to their service menu.

The fact is, mobile massage therapy is thriving and the therapists providing this service are busier now than ever, especially those who have a strong and clearly professional online presence.

### **Home-Based Protocols**

Some clients who choose to receive massage at home may be concerned with the cleaning and disinfection protocols used at the locations they were visiting,

but more often they simply wish to limit their exposure to the number of people they are around.

Many clients seeking out mobile massage request therapists who are both vaccinated and will wear a mask when visiting their home. Each therapist, however, will need to professionally address this issue, not allowing their personal feelings to interfere with the preferences of the client. This information can be presented passively on your website, in social media posts or in-person when someone asks.

To ensure the safety of both the therapist and client, it is a professional best-practice to wear a mask whenever physical distancing is not possible, such as in a massage therapy treatment, no matter the vaccination status of either therapist or client.

There are many screening protocols that should be implemented when doing mobile massage, to ensure the potential client is actually the therapist's ideal client; someone who is not outside of their

service area; is not expecting any "extras"; and is in the condition to receive massage therapy.

For safety-screening protocols, it is best to obtain all client information prior to scheduling the appointment. The therapist should ask the potential new client, for example, how the client found them and what type of massage they are seeking. They should ask for the client's full name, address, email address, phone number and date of birth. The therapist can use this information to do an online search on the client to see if there is any information presented which would make the therapist choose to decline the appointment. (Often, those people looking for something other than massage therapy do not want to provide their personal information.)

The therapist should also inform the client they provide only professional therapeutic massage treatment, and that there is no tolerance for any unsolicited comments, behavior, sexual harassment or assault of any kind. This is important, as it

is very much a safety issue for the therapist going into an uncontrolled environment, and they must clearly separate themselves from the sex industry at all times.

As importantly, the therapist ought to have a COVID-19 screening protocol in place and ask questions to find out if the potential client has had any symptoms. Of course, a general health screening must be undertaken to ensure the client is permitted to receive massage therapy—in other words, that they do not have any contraindications to treatment—before the therapist goes to their location.

It is also wise and good practice to charge an appointment booking fee or deposit to secure an appointment. Naturally, if the therapist is uncomfortable at any time during this screening process, they should decline the appointment request.

### **Who is Your Ideal Client?**

Once the therapist has their screening protocols in place, they can start searching for their ideal clients. They can



Some corporate businesses will pay for their employees to receive monthly massage treatments at home as an added benefit.

It is a good idea for the therapist to invest in a massage chair to utilize at office locations and events—or outside the client's home, such as in a private garden.



give some thought to who these clients are or may be. What type of client are they interested in and how are they going to find them?

If a therapist wishes to gain access to many clients at one location, they can reach out to corporate offices. Researching the range of offices near them, they can go in to introduce themselves with promotional material or perhaps send an email with their credentials and information to a corporate contact. The therapist can explain how massage therapy can help benefit the company's employees, concentrating on what is in it for the

employee, as well as what it can do for the company and how massage can be utilized as a business write-off.

It is a good idea for the therapist to invest in a massage chair to utilize at office locations and events. A massage chair takes up minimal space, is lightweight and also allows the therapist to offer shorter massage sessions while clients remain clothed. This makes it convenient for both the therapist and corporate office staff.

### **How Much You Should Charge**

Many therapists do not factor in driving time when setting their pricing. A

one-hour mobile massage treatment can quickly become two hours of their time, depending on the location and how efficient the therapist is with setting up and breaking down their table.

The mobile massage rate should take into account the extra time spent doing mobile massage. The therapist needs to travel to and from the location, set up and break down equipment, complete an intake form and assessments, and also reassess following the treatment. They should also disinfect their table in front of the client before and after the appointment and allow time for payment and rebooking.

On social media platforms, therapists often ask what they should charge for mobile massage. Unfortunately, no one can answer this question for them. Rather, they need to create a combined business and personal budget that includes everything they spend money on, and then set their pricing so those bills are covered, and the massage therapist is able to put some money aside for taxes and emergencies.

Someone who lives in South Florida, for example, will more than likely bill a higher rate than someone in a small town in Kentucky. The cost of living is more expensive in a place like South Florida, so this would make sense. The therapist should not compare their pricing to others when they have no idea what someone else's living situation is like. Do they have a family to support? Are there incoming medical bills? Are they single with not many financial responsibilities? All of these factors should be considered when setting their pricing.

### **Mobile Challenges**

Although there are many pros to being a mobile massage therapist, there are some cons as well. They include spending more time in a car, causing wear and tear on the vehicle. The therapist might get stuck in a traffic jam and end up missing an appointment—so it is always wise to use a GPS, even if the therapist knows where they are going—to help avoid traffic and road closures. The therapist will also be spending more time setting up and

breaking down their table, causing more wear and tear to both equipment and their own body. It is therefore a good idea to stay healthy and have a workout regimen to keep the body strong.

There can also be many distractions while providing massage therapy in someone else's space. For example, family members or pets may interrupt the session, there can be deliveries, dogs that will not stop barking, cats that may jump on the table, and many other interruptions. The therapist must be patient and understanding in these situations, as the client is seeking out mobile massage therapy for their own convenience.

When the therapist schedules their on-site massage appointments, there are many other things to consider. How far will they be driving? Does the client have enough space for them to work in? Will there be interruptions to contend with? Are there stairs to navigate in order to reach the space the client has selected in their location? Is there accessible, free parking nearby or will some kind of pass be required?

### Overall, a Great Option

Mobile massage is a great option for those therapists who do not want a lot of overhead, who prefer to work for themselves and who like to have flexibility in their schedule. It is a business model without the need for renting a location, so there is no facility maintenance, utility bills or repairs. These four examples alone are a huge bonus to being a mobile massage therapist. They are the boss—and being the boss means they can create their own practice in the form they want it to be.


They set their own schedule to work when they want, where they want and with whom they choose as their ideal clients. If they have children, they can work while the kids are in school and enjoy the evenings with them. They can work when their spouse or significant other is also at work, and then take the same days off to maximize their free time together.

Is there a yoga or workout class they want to take a few times a week? They set their schedule and make it happen! Is their

favorite band or sports team coming to town? They have the freedom to block that day off and go attend.

Mobile massage is not for everyone; however, it is something that should be considered—especially if you want to play a role in the demand and supply of convenient, safe and effective massage therapy. **M**

**Michelle Roos**, LMT, BCTMB, is an author, educator and a mobile massage business owner in South Florida. She owns an education company and Facebook group, Mobile Massage Mastery, for those interested in advancing their mobile massage career; and also co-owns Cupping Canada and Cupping USA with her husband, Paul Kohlmeier.

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# Take Control of Your Email

By Amy Bradley Radford, LMT, BCTMB

Welcome to our year together in advanced business strategies. Over the course of 2022, I will offer you month-by-month strategies to process through to the next big step to assist you in your business success.

As a business coach for massage therapists, I find myself working the most with solopreneurs who are well-established with clients but searching for business solutions to take the next steps in business. When you are busy with massage, you almost have to create the time needed to work on your business and push it forward. Whether increasing rates, bringing additional income streams into your business or employing other therapists, finding the energy and ability to expand into something more can feel overwhelming.

This month's column topic will help you establish a new way to manage an aspect of your life and business that is probably siphoning off some much-needed mental energy from you—and therefore not allowing you to move forward to other beneficial goals.

## Use Time Wisely

Every business has an economic ceiling, meaning supply and demand have limits. I am sure as a busy massage therapist you are familiar with your ceiling. This is the number of sessions you can complete each week that meet your financial goals

while maintaining the physical energy you need to perform those sessions without taxing your body or creating injury. For many, that number is somewhere between 12 and 24 sessions a week.

When you are consistently booking your preferred number of sessions per week, this typically means your spare time is limited. If you are looking to create positive change and grow your

time and energy. Since none of us can magically create more hours in the day, it takes some creative organizing to find time when we think there isn't enough of it.

To create more time, the first thing you have to do is look for ways to clean up, organize or simplify other areas in your life, therefore creating the mental space, energy and time to divert to working on business growth.

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One of the best places to start creating more time for growth is to streamline the paperwork side of your life and business.

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business further, you have to find the energy or time to do that without losing the balance of what a thriving hands-on practice requires as well.

It's quite the balancing act to be efficient while ultra-busy as a solopreneur. From my own experience, in order to have the energy or time to work on business growth, I must first find or create

One of the best places to start creating more time for growth is to streamline the paperwork side of your life and business. Since a majority of paperwork has gone digital, we are going to talk about how to create more energy and time by streamlining your business digital needs; specifically, your email.

## End Email Inbox Overwhelm

Busy professionals need to find the most efficient use of time that helps them to stay on top of their business. Starting with how email is managed and staying on top of the digital aspects of a business creates time, mental freedom and motivation.

In my business, I sit at a computer and frequently check my emails. I have noticed a theme with many of the massage therapists I work with: Since they stand at a massage table all day, the digital side of their life and business get neglected because it is not a requirement for their hands-on job.

Therapists have told me they may not even look at their emails but once or twice a week. I have also heard they feel lost in a sea of email, with 2,000-plus emails sitting in their inbox, and can't seem to find what they need when they need it.

This approach can leave you frustrated. Seeing that large number of emails sitting in your inbox can feel identical to having a large pile of mail cluttering up your counter. Clutter drains you of mental energy, and you need mental energy to move forward for business growth.

## 5 Ways to Declutter Your Inbox

There are a few simple systems that can help you manage your email, starting today.

# Clutter drains you of mental energy, and you need mental energy to move forward for business growth.

**1 Separate your work email account from your personal account.** This will require that you create a new email address for business-related emails only. This separation helps you identify your business needs faster.

**2 Unsubscribe or delete any unnecessary subscriptions littering your inbox.** Whenever you subscribe for emailed information or whenever you purchase from a business, your email is added to their email list. Some companies send email daily, and you must determine if you want or need the information coming from them. If you do not, then stopping the overflow of emails is the best thing you can do for your inbox overwhelm. You typically can find an unsubscribe link at the bottom of those emails.

**3 Use folders, labels and filters.** Folders and labels are the filing system inside your email account. All email service providers have a system where you can create folders to move your emails for future reference. Look over the email topics you

have in your inbox and determine the categories you have. Some of those categories might be bills, income, education, client communication or licensing. If you do not know how to set up categories inside your email, you can search for a video tutorial that can easily assist you.

**4 Use such filters as promotions, social media, primary or main inbox.** Most email systems have options to presort your email for you. These options can be selected to be turned on when setting up a new email or they can be located in the settings area of your email. Look for the keyword "filter."

**5 Commit to cleaning up your emails and reaching a zero inbox.** Spend five to 10 minutes a day in your inbox for cleaning up, deleting, moving emails to appropriate folders and responding as required. Missing important emails occurs because there are too many in your inbox. Lack of responding typically happens because the answering of those emails was forgotten. Try


for a zero inbox—which means keeping your email inbox empty, or as close to empty as possible, at all times.

## Free Up Energy

The feeling of having your life organized in your email is amazing. You will find that having this area of your life organized creates a feeling of success and accomplishment, contributing to the mental creativity you need for building the next phase of your business. **M**

### Amy Bradley Radford,

LMT, BCTMB (ppsseminars.com), has been a massage therapist and educator for more than 25 years. She is the owner of Massage Business Methods and the developer of PPS (Pain Patterns and Solutions) Seminars CE courses and a National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork-approved CE provider. Her articles for this publication include "Start a Massage Practice. The MT's Guide to Budgeting for Startup Costs & Monthly Expenses" and "The Client's Body Does the Healing (The MT Provides the Opportunity)" (both, massagemag.com).

 Read one of Amy Bradley Radford's many articles on massagemag.com, including "The Power of the Hour: Create Financial Reliability with 60-Minute Appointments."

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# TOP 6

## Marketing Tasks You Should Quit Now



### QUIT SPENDING ALL YOUR EFFORTS ATTRACTING NEW CLIENTS.

It can take anywhere from five to 25 times as much money to attract a new client as it does to keep one you've got. Sure, in the beginning you've got to have the clients to work on before you can get them to come back; but after you've started building your client base, your energy is better spent doing the things that keep clients coming back.



### QUIT TAKING YOUR CURRENT CLIENTS FOR GRANTED.

How do you keep clients coming back? You start with the rebooking conversation, but then it's all about customer service. What is the *total* experience of engaging with your business like? (Not just their time on the table.) Can you make it better? Also ask yourself: Would some of your current clients benefit from more frequent or longer sessions? Offer it to them! (By the way, good customer service starts with having client-centered marketing.)

Too many massage therapists hate marketing. Perhaps it's time we take a biiiiig step back and reconsider the way we're doing that marketing.



### QUIT PROMOTING MESSAGE.

We are massage therapists, but we aren't selling message, we're selling the results people can get from massage and the experience of getting that massage from you and your business. If your promotional efforts are all about convincing people how great massage is, it's time to re-work that message to be client-centered; that is, what change or experience do you deliver with the tool of massage therapy? Sell what clients actually want.

## 4



### QUIT DOING SO MUCH.

Think about all the things you do under the heading of marketing: Facebook, website, Instagram, blog, Twitter, TikTok, discounts, flyers, rewards for client referrals, networking meetings, Google My Business, YouTube, discounts, free chair massage, and on and on. It's exhausting, but we think the more we do the more clients we'll attract. That's rarely true. Also, when we do so much it's difficult to know which marketing efforts work and which ones don't. What if you chose five marketing tasks and focused on those alone for three to six months? When you figure out which ones are working for you, drop the ones that aren't and maybe try some new things if you want to.

## 5



### QUIT GIVING MONEY AWAY RANDOMLY.

We jump to discounts and free massages to solve customer service problems and promote our practices too quickly and too often.

Discounts can work for you when you use them strategically. They need to have a specific purpose and a measurable goal. If you don't know what they're supposed to do for you, how do you know if they work? A strategic discount also often has an end date. That allows you to test whether it made a difference or not. How many discounts are you offering right now? What are they supposed to accomplish? Are they doing that?

When it comes to solving a customer service problem, a sincere apology accompanied by a gift certificate—even if it's less than the price of a massage—for something that's specific to that client carries more weight than a free massage. Does your client love the coffee shop down the street? A sincere apology plus a \$30 gift certificate to that coffee shop shows you put more thought into your "Sorry, I screwed up" than "have a free massage" does.

## 6



### QUIT BEING GENERIC.

A long-term client relationship is based on three things: giving the client the results they want, creating an experience that's a good fit for them, and the hard-to-quantify personal connection. The more you promote you and your practice *specifically*, the less marketing you have to do. Why? Because you'll be attracting the kind of clients who specifically want what you specifically offer. Dare to be unique. Your marketing shouldn't look like every other massage practice out there.

**Kelly Bowers** is the owner of the Healing Arts Business Academy ([healingartsbizacademy.com](http://healingartsbizacademy.com)). She is the author of three books—"The Accidental Business Owner," "Can I Deduct That," and "Between Doormat and Diva"—and an NCBTMB-approved provider of continuing education. You can find her on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. She practices (NC license 16669) in Durham, North Carolina.

Read "Marketing Without the Ick: Practice Confident Massage Promotion," by Kelly Bowers, on [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com).

# Game On!

## A Sense of Urgency will Push You to Create a Thriving Practice

By Mark Liskey, LMT

**IMAGINE YOU'RE ON** a massage-business reality TV show. Your competition is stiff: Erik Dalton, PhD (Myoskeletal Alignment Techniques) and Judith DeLany (Neuromuscular Therapy), along with several less-renowned massage therapists. You're all flown to a beautiful island with a thriving downtown and lots of tourists.

To win, you have to build a successful massage business in three months. Specifically, you must generate a monthly income of \$4,500 (after paying rent) for the last (third) month you're on the island.

### Massage Business Reality TV Show Rules

1. You can't spend any money on advertising.
2. You start at zero dollars at the beginning of each month. In other words, earnings from one month don't carry over into the next month.
3. You're not allowed to supplement your income by being a subcontractor or employee. So, no getting a job at a fancy spa and raking in big tips.
4. You must rent a massage room.
5. You must make \$1,500 your first month on the island or you get sent home.

### Month One: Make \$1,500 or Go Home

The immediate challenge with making \$1,500 the first month on the island is that you have to rent a massage room without having any money to spend on a massage room. How do you do that? It's actually fairly simple: You pay per massage. A client comes in and pays you. From that money you pay the room rental fee. In this scenario, you always have the rent money because there's no rent due until you actually do a massage.

How much should you pay per massage? The least amount you can. You need to make \$1,500 by the end of month one and that's not a small order when you're starting from scratch. When negotiating a pay-per-massage room-rental fee, my suggestion is to shoot for \$10 or less.

Let's do the math to see how many



massages you need to do during the first month to stay on the island. Nineteen one-hour massages at \$80/hour makes you \$1,520 (19 x \$80). But now you owe \$190 for your rent (19 massages x \$10). So, now you need to do three more massages (for a total of 22 massages) to cover your rent.

The final math looks like this: 22 massages at \$80/hour = \$1,760. Your rent is \$220 (22 massages x \$10/per massage). \$1,760 - \$220 = \$1,540. Boom. Month one hurdle cleared.

Where do you find someone who's willing to do a pay-per-massage room-rental deal? Think outside the box. Maybe there's a chiropractor on the island who has an extra treatment room that doesn't get used a lot. Granted, that may not be the most relaxing environment, but as long as the room is presentable, your skilled hands can carry the day.

As you're looking for that inexpensive



room you also need to assess your competition.

### Assess the Competition

Could it be any worse? You are up against two giants in the rehabilitative massage world. How are you going to compete against them? Answer: You're not. They own rehabilitative massage. Let them duke it out for rehab clients on the island.

What's left for you? Everything else. But everything else is too broad. My suggestion would be to narrow your focus to people who want to relax or get out of pain. These customers are everywhere—cities, suburbs, towns, countries and beautiful islands.

This strategy steers you away from a head-to-head competition with DeLany and Dalton, but lands you in an all-out brawl with massage therapists on the island who do relaxation and pain-relief

massage. How do you compete with them?

Do relaxation and pain-relief massage better than they do.

### Stand Out from Other MTs

To make your relaxation and pain-relief massage stand out from the other massage therapists on the island, try this:

- During the intake, palpate to find the pain areas the client wants you to work before the client actually gets on the table. That way you'll know exactly where to go.
- Deliver the pressure that is best for the client and be consistent with that pressure throughout the massage.
- After the massage explain your findings and treatment. "Your right trap (grab your own trap) was really tight. I did some focused pressure work there. How does it feel now?"

- If you were working on a pain condition, follow up after the massage to see how the client is doing.

If you brand yourself as a caring massage therapist who is spot-on with her pressure, your name will spread across the island—but it will take a while—and you only have one month to make \$1,500 or you'll get the boot. You need to accelerate this word-of-mouth process without spending any money. There's one surefire way you can do that: free massage.

### Free Massage "Advertising"

Hands sell better than mouths. Period. And wouldn't you rather sell with your hands? After all, massage is second nature to you; being a salesperson, not so much.

However, free comes with a built-in challenge: How do you go from free to paying? You have rules.

### **Rule #1: 15-minute free massages for potential clients and 30-minute free massages for potential referral sources.**

On the island, potential referral sources are shop owners/managers/employees—the people who come in contact with tourists and make recommendations. In real life, referral sources will be professionals who align with your relaxation and pain-relief massage service, like personal trainers, chiropractors, PTs, wellness doctors, acupuncturists and nutritionists.

### **Rule #2: Only one free massage.**

That's right—only one. Say it from the get-go. When you do, everyone will get it. Of course, if you have an exceptional referral source and you think a free massage here and there might help with more referrals, then it makes sense to break this rule.

The last thing to do in month one is to start a Facebook business page. A Facebook business page will give you an online presence and boost your credibility. Ask clients to like your page and follow you. The more your name is out there, the better it is for your business.

### **Month Two: Build**

In month two you're in a good position to transition from pay per massage to monthly rent. Why? Because you just handed your "landlord" \$220 for 22 massages and that makes you a viable monthly renter. Also, you'll need to double your massage total this month. Do you really want to pay \$440 in rent?

It's time to strike a monthly deal. Offer an amount that is more than what you just paid, but not a whole lot more. In this case, I'd offer \$250 a month.

Renting a room (having a physical location where your business is) earns you a dot on Google maps, which in turn allows you to appear in the local search. The local search appears at the top of a search page. (Search for "pizza" and all those pizza shops that show up at the top of the first Google page are in the local search.)

To get in the local search you must claim your business on Google My

Business (GMB). Once you go through that process, follow GMB's suggestion to optimize your GMB page. It's all free and can improve your GMB ranking (move you up on the page).

Below the local search results on a Google page are the organic search results. You're more likely to improve your rank in an organic search if you have a website that is engaging and draws in visitors. You know what that means: Time to build a website—for free.

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## **A Facebook business page will give you an online presence and boost your credibility.**

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Some companies, like Weebly, offer a free website builder that provides a basic website that is passable until you can afford to pay for a website builder. As you're building your website, ask existing customers to review your service on your GMB page. Positive reviews on your GMB page can only help your ranking.

Next, take those positive reviews from your GMB page and post them on your website. That will help with converting website viewers into appointment callers.

If you have a favorite social media platform, create a business handle and start engaging potential customers by providing them with massage information that is helpful, not sales-y, like how to do self-massage with a tennis ball.

Tie in your physical world to your online world by making sure all your clients and potential clients know how to connect with you and follow you on social media.

One more thing to do in month two: Go back and re-evaluate what you did in

month one with free massage. Pull back from the referral sources that are meh and double down on the referral sources that are crushing it for you.

Now you're rolling and ready for the grand finale—month three.

### **Month Three: Earn \$4,500 (After Paying Rent) and Win**

Professional colleagues on the island are spreading your name. Clients on the island are spreading your name. Reviews on your GMB and website are spreading your name. And posts and pictures on your Facebook business page and your other favorite social media platforms are spreading your name.

In essence, you have built a free-advertising machine and it's sending you a steady stream of new clients. But this month is the most challenging of all the months because you need to do 59.5 massages to win. The math is  $56.25 \text{ massages } (\$4,500) + 3.125 (\$250) = 59.5 \text{ massages (rounded up)}$ . Is there something you can tweak on your free-advertising machine to bring a few more clients in?

For example, did you offer free massage to the employees at the tourism center? Did you offer free massage to the island tour bus drivers in town? Are you nurturing the free massage referral sources enough for them to come up with even more potential referral sources for you?

Make the tweaks to your free-advertising machine and massage away.

### **The Winners**

The great thing about this reality show is, like in real life, there can be more than one winner. Certainly, Dalton and Delany will be in the winners' circle, but you can be there too—if you follow a plan like the one I just laid out. Let's recap:

- Use free massage to bring in clients and create referral sources.
- Provide excellent massage therapy.
- Negotiate a room-rental rate that benefits your bottom line.
- Create a GMB page and optimize it.
- Build a website for free and add GMB reviews to it.

- Create a Facebook page for your business.
- Establish a presence on your favorite social media platform and engage potential clients.
- Re-evaluate and tweak as needed.

### Create Urgency for Yourself

We shouldn't overlook the fact that life is not a reality TV show. To build a massage practice that can provide you with full-time income will likely take longer than three months. Why? A reality show has a steady state of urgency baked in, and that urgency produces results. For example, on the reality TV show, you're going to fight like hell not to get kicked off the island so that you're not embarrassed in front of millions of viewers. In real life, no one but you will know if you missed a goal.

The trick to staying on track and getting results in real life is to create urgency. You can do that by setting and meeting deadlines. Having a free massage event on your calendar is a deadline. Announcing on your Facebook business page that your website will be up and running with a special offering on a certain date is a deadline. Telling a client

The trick to staying on track and getting results in real life is to create urgency. You can do that by setting and meeting deadlines.

that you'll follow up in two days is a deadline.

The right number of deadlines will create just enough urgency to push you along, but not overwhelm you. I can't tell you what the right number of deadlines is for you; you have to figure that out as you go along. Adhere to those deadlines as you

execute the free advertising strategies I just talked about—and you won't need to be in a reality TV show to make sure your massage business dream comes true. **M**

**Mark Liskey** is a massage therapist, massage CE provider and author of "The Pain-Free Massage Therapist," a body-mechanics strategies and techniques book for eliminating pain in the massage room and extending massage careers. You can access free, instructional body-mechanics videos at [painfreemassage.com](http://painfreemassage.com). His articles for [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com) include "Stacked Vs. Unstacked Joints: The Body Mechanics Study That Matters."

Read "Claim Your Google My Business Page to Get Free Publicity for Your Massage Practice," by Allison M. Payne, on [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com).

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# Unusual Effects of Cupping and Vacuum Therapies

By Anita Shannon

It is exciting to see so many therapists using cups to perform vacuum therapies for clients. Many styles of cupping

are now being taught and it is understandable that this allied approach to bodywork has integrated so well with other

When treating a client for the first time, I have found it is easier for the body to tolerate and to respond positively to vacuum therapy when the cups are used with massage movements.

valuable massage therapy modalities.

We receive many emails with questions about seemingly peculiar reactions clients have had during and after treatments, including blistering, hives, strange discolorations, swelling, nausea, headaches and more. While some may consider this an adverse reaction, it can also be viewed as valuable information on the actual condition of the client.

## Blistering

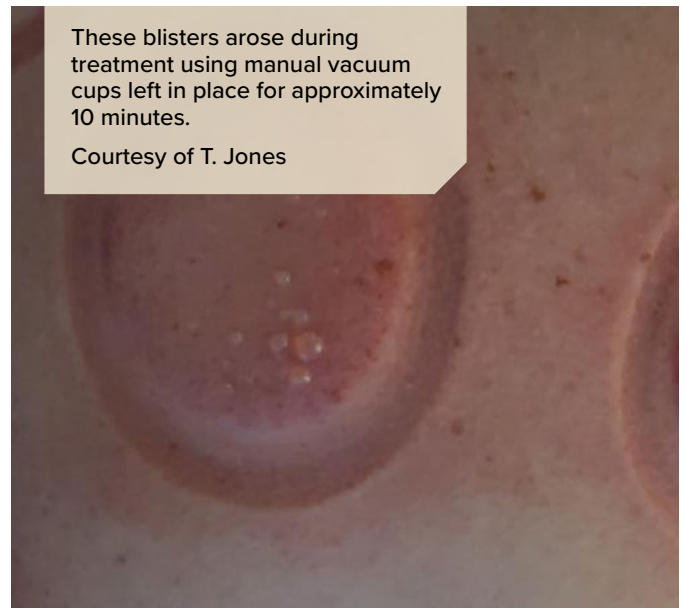
We have received multiple questions regarding blistering and each time we respond first with questions for the therapist, such as: Does the client

have an inflammatory issue and is it a general condition or is it localized to the area that blistered? Did the blisters appear while the cup was in place or sometime after it was removed? Is the client on any oral or topical (cream or patch) medications? How long was the cup left in place?

Knowing the actions of the techniques, such as creating a counter-irritant response, will help to understand why the client may have had this reaction. A very large part of the assessment is the duration that the cups were left in place. ACE techniques specify that the cups can be left in place for up to three

These blisters arose during treatment using manual vacuum cups left in place for approximately 10 minutes.

Courtesy of T. Jones



to five minutes and then removed. They can always be replaced in the area if more treatment is required. Our reasoning is that the techniques are so powerful that the “less-is-better” approach is very effective for most clients and does not create more severe reactions.

If the blisters appear under the cup after a few minutes, it suggests that the inflammation is more superficial, while a deeper inflammation often surfaces a bit later (since it would logically take more time travelling via the dilated blood vessels to the skin surface). If the cups are left in place longer than three to five minutes, the deeper inflammation could come up while the cup is still adhered.

When treating a client for the first time, I have found it is easier for the body to tolerate and to respond positively to vacuum therapy when the cups are used with massage movements. I often begin with pumping movements to acclimate the client’s body to the effects of the work. A thorough client intake and consultation is also imperative to understand what I am working with.

If hives have appeared during or after a treatment, educator Martha Graham has this input: “A localized histamine reaction can be a normal response to cupping, and it typically lasts for a few minutes to an hour longer ... The histamine reaction could

These blisters came up after the magnetic cups were left in place for approximately 15 minutes.

Courtesy of H. Hachet



be from a harbored chemical in the body or simply the reactivation of the inflammation cycle. The lymphatic system will remain stimulated with the lymphatic terminals open for approximately 24 hours after treatment. In theory the reaction could last for 24 hours, however, but that is not a typical response. Of course, if the hives persist, are systemic or become severe it would be pertinent for the client to seek medical attention.”

### Discolorations

Strange discolorations often appear when the vacuum pressure is high, or the cup is left in place for a long while. They can also appear with very little pressure or duration at old injury sites or surgical sites. These “decorations”

are unique to each client and offer so much information. These are not bruises, but bruising can occur with aggressive cupping techniques. If the mark can be erased a day or so later it indicates that it is not a bruise, so that is one easy way to determine which one has occurred.

Paying attention to discolorations can be fascinating and truly informative. A client with severe scoliosis ended up with dark purple and black discolorations that indicated a serious head, neck and back injury in her early history. Her mother reported that she had fallen down cement stairs on her head as a three-year-old child. That knowledge allowed me to trace the damage back through the compensatory

patterns her body adopted as she grew up and release them so she could maximize her range of motion with the Harrington Bars, plates and cables that had been installed.

We saw one student in class turn a yellow color all over and when she questioned her mother, it turned out she had been seriously jaundiced as a child. Many women I work on who have had breast surgeries or C-sections do end up with discolorations around the incisions; the blood can get trapped and stay lodged in the tissues. The black to brownish-red colors will indicate how long ago the surgery or injury took place. When I see a mixture of these colors, it often indicates repetitive movement patterns or numerous injuries to the same area that are frequently found in athletes.

### Swelling

It does not seem to happen regularly, but there can be swelling in an area hours after treatment. If there is no inflammation, this leads us to consider any restrictions to lymphatic flow that may have been overlooked in the treatment. If the area is hot, this could indicate latent inflammation and the body has reacted with fluids gathering in the area. Another potential cause could be an autoimmune issue such as fibromyalgia. It is so beneficial to do a lighter treatment for the first one to two appointments,

Nausea and headaches are very rare, but both lead to a review of any medications or supplements the client listed in their intake and to find any they may have forgotten.

including a lot of pumping with centripetal movements.

### Additional Reactions

Nausea and headaches are very rare, but both lead to a review of any medications or supplements the client listed in their intake and to find any they may have forgotten. It is also so helpful to review surgical history that included anesthesia, or any exposure during their life to heavy-duty chemicals.

Another consideration is vagus nerve dysfunction, which can lead to nausea, lack of appetite, dizziness, IBS and more. There are no listed causes for vagus nerve dysfunction but working the lateral and posterior neck with vacuum therapy can greatly affect the nerve and cause an increase or decrease in symptoms for the client.

Headaches frequently indicate dehydration, and vacuum therapy often stimulates a healthy thirst that leads the client to

drink a good amount of water afterward, and the headache will disappear quickly. If the headache persists, it is necessary to investigate if it is caused by medications, incomplete soft tissue release, an impinged nerve or blood vessel, or other potential causes.

### See into the Body

This is the joy of sleuthing via the cups! The treatments are so effective, and we are also given valuable clues through each client's

unique response to the treatment. Be sure to use your cup as a magnifying glass to see into that body on the table, and continually update your assessments to develop a truly effective custom treatment protocol that produces real results. **M**

**Anita Shannon, LMT**, is licensed in massage therapy and cosmetology since 1983, and an educator since 1990. She presents workshops on ACE Massage Cupping and MediCupping since developing these methods in 2002. She is also a MASSAGE Magazine All-Star, one of a group of innovative therapists and teachers who are educating the magazine's community of massage therapists in our print magazine, on our social media channels and on [massagemag.com/all-stars](http://massagemag.com/all-stars).

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The Comfort Pad is available in fabric and pleather.  
*Featherstones, featherstonesinc.com*

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*Achedaway, achedaway.com*

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Fringe Mysa CBD Lotion is sold in a 4-ounce tube with 1,000 milligrams of CBD isolate in each tube.

*fringe, joinfringe.com*



### ◀ The Elevate Mastermind

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The Elevate Mastermind membership program includes tools to elevate home and work environments.

*Elevate with Gael, elevatewithgael.com*



### ◀ "Quacking Up — How Racing Rubber Ducks Saved My Sanity"

Massage business educator Felicia Brown found an unexpected avenue for pandemic creativity and coping: racing rubber ducks. She experienced feeling more connected to joy and happiness and was surprised to learn what wise-yet-comical teachers the ducks are. In her e-book, "Quacking Up," the author brings those lessons to life while sharing a glimpse into her challenges along the way.

"Quacking Up" is available as an e-book/instant download.

*Felicia Brown, feliciabrown.com*



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# Activate Your Creeper Beeper

## This Strategy Will Help Keep You Safe

By Melinda Hastings, LMT, BCTMB

**DEALING WITH CREEPERS** is such a normal occurrence that most massage therapists expect it to happen at some point in their career. Industry Facebook groups are filled with therapists sharing their experiences—but with all this talk, the lack of proper education on this critical topic is deafening.

I'm taking on this critical task because in order to move forward and upward as an industry, we must not only acknowledge that this problem exists but learn how to handle it when it happens and take steps to prevent it from happening in the first place. Keeping therapists safe so they can build thriving, professional and respected practices is a task that I'm fully committed to.

### Who are Creepers, Exactly?

When I opened my first practice 25 years ago (and long before that), massage therapy had a much different view in the minds of the public. Therapists were commonly perceived as sex workers, lumped right in with illegal prostitution. Because of that, a significant percentage of males seeking massage naturally expected a “happy ending.”

Today, men still make up the largest majority of creepers, but women aren't immune to being creepers.

Creepers can be both men and women who request, expect or hint about sexual services. They use direct and indirect verbal language as well as body language to attempt to convey their message. They encompass all ages and backgrounds: financial, educational, religious, race, nationality, and everything in between.

Both male and female therapists deal with creepers.

“T,” a Texas-based male massage therapist, has dealt with both male and female creepers. They typically begin by complimenting his skills with language along the lines of, “Your hands are really good ...” before asking if sexual services come with the massage.

“K,” a female massage therapist practicing in Iowa, has noticed that creepers typically request last-minute deep tissue sessions, yet have difficulty expressing areas of pain when questioned. Another tactic she has noticed is creepers' use of small talk during the massage in an attempt to soften the therapist's boundaries before directly asking for sexual services.

In my own experience, I've noticed that many creepers try to break the ice by quizzically asking, “I went to this other massage place once and she offered to do ‘extra’ at the end. Do people ever ask you for that? Is that normal?”

### But Creepers Aren't Always...

... men who request work on their thighs, groin or hip flexors. Nor are they men who request very light pressure. They don't always use the age-old terms *masseuse*, *masseur* or *massage parlor*, either. And most importantly, they aren't always men.

Are we being unfair?

These requests and terms tend to elicit a fiery response from therapists as they activate their creeper beeper. Responses often include words of disgust with an explanation that those types of services are not offered, a threat to inform local law enforcement, or a warning to never contact again.

While it's important to trust your intuition, you should avoid judging too quickly. Without asking the appropriate questions, we can't correctly assess their motive. Instead, men (at least those who raise our red flags) simply get lumped into one category: creeper. Clients should be vetted individually to avoid unfairly judging all men as creepers—and to identify female creepers.

### Ask Appropriate Questions

The following vetting questions will help you convey your authority position while weeding out potential creepers.



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Creepers can be both men and women who request, expect or hint about sexual services.

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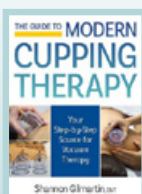


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## Activate Your Creeper Beeper

1. How did you find (your business name) today? Were you referred by a doctor or current client?
2. Are you currently having pain?
3. Is your primary focus for your massage session relaxation or pain relief?
4. Tell me a little about your (problem).

These specific questions send the message that your business does not offer sexual services while also allowing you to complete a short intake so that you can recommend the most appropriate session for the client's specific needs. This method is most effective when a potential client calls for an appointment, but can also be adapted for email, social media messaging and text messaging requests. If you offer online scheduling, you can easily implement this vetting strategy by automatically sending a questionnaire once a new client appointment is booked or by following up via phone before fully confirming the appointment.

## Authority-Based Marketing Repels Creepers

Before a potential client requests an appointment, provide them with marketing content that is authority-based and highlights your expertise. From your website to your social media to your print marketing, your content needs to focus on:

- Exactly what you do
- Who your ideal target market is
- How your knowledge and skills can solve their problem

I've evaluated thousands of therapists' marketing content and can easily identify those who have dealt with a lot of creepers. Their websites and social media are filled with statements like, "Inappropriate sexual behavior will not be tolerated," "All requests for sexual services will be reported to the police" and even "Massages are not sexual. Don't ask!"

These types of statements are coming from a need for safety (and most likely a lot of aggravation). But you need to ask yourself how that can be perceived by the public. Does it come across as aggressive? Is it professional? Is it off-putting to non-creepers?

Rather than focusing on what your business doesn't offer, I've found it to be much more effective to focus on your authority as it pertains to your knowledge and expertise.

## What if a Potential Creeper Ends up on Your Table?

Authority marketing and proper vetting questions can't always guarantee a creeper-free practice but can significantly reduce the chances that those clients make it all the way to your table.

No matter what type of client you are seeing (even clients you've worked with for years), it's important to trust your gut as your skill in discerning verbal and non-verbal behaviors develops. However, you should fully evaluate those behaviors before choosing how you react. Here are some key language and behaviors to watch for:


- Requests for undraped massage. Creepers will use lots of “reasoning” such as being hot, linens are too heavy, linens are too scratchy, or other therapists don’t require draping. Undraped massage can apply to both genitals and breasts.
- Touching themselves inappropriately or frequently. Occasionally, a male client may need to adjust his genitals after getting positioned on the table or after you have moved his body during the session. Female clients may need to reposition their breasts in the same scenarios. These are not instances where your creeper beeper should be activated. If touching is more than simply adjusting or repositioning, or if it happens frequently in the session, it’s a good idea to ask if the client is feeling uncomfortable.
- Inappropriate sexual comments. This can be as simple as a casual joke or as bold as asking for a hand job. Early in my career, I had the jokesters as well as men who straight-out ask for what they want. Terms and phrases I became aware of included *handy*, *manual release*, *jerk off*, *rub n’ tug* and *tickle my pickle*. However, most creepers won’t be so bold as to outright ask. Instead, they’ll use less obvious language to gauge if you’re willing.

In all instances, I took the approach of firmly saying that sexual jokes and requests are not appropriate in any professional massage and the behavior stopped. However, if a potential client is outright asking before an appointment is scheduled, they obviously don’t pass my vetting process.

### A Creeper-Free Practice

These strategies, combined with trusting your intuition, will help you repel and reduce the creepers while shining a bright light on your authority and expertise. Since I began taking these steps nearly 20 years ago, I’ve never had a creeper land on my table. Whether you’re a male or female therapist, you can have a creeper-free practice too! **M**

**Melinda Hastings**, LMT, BCTMB, MTI (inspiredtherapistseminars.com), has practiced massage therapy since 1996. She holds active licenses in Washington and Texas, and is also a Texas Massage Therapy Instructor. She is a Nationally Approved Continuing Education Provider through the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage & Bodywork. Her CE classes are offered through her seminar business, Inspired Therapist Seminars. Her articles for MASSAGE Magazine include “6 Keys to Professional Presentation for Massage Therapists” and “The Power of Relaxation Massage: Reach More Clients by Marketing Massage as ‘Just’ Stress Relief” (both, [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com)).

 Read “How to Protect Yourself in Dangerous Situations,” by Teresa M. Matthews, on [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com).

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# How to Eat Healthfully — Even When There's No Time

By Angela Lehman

I think all massage therapists would agree, when we feel good, we do our best work. In choosing a profession that uses our bodies to help others, how can you not feed your body for success?

Massage therapists also know it's hard to fit in nutritious eating during busy days. That extra client added at the last minute or an outcall appointment taking longer than planned are only some of many possibilities that get in the way of a meal break.

Oh, and if you're anything like me, I didn't

plan any meal breaks for myself for years in my private practice. Let's just say, I've gotten wiser with age and fixed that poor practice. So, even when days are hectic and the unexpected keeps popping up, wouldn't it be nice to know you have food that's going to make you feel your best? Well, come with me, and let's

create a road map to your eating success.

## Key Food Groups

Knowing what to buy is half the battle. With so many trendy diets it's hard to know where to start. For our purposes, we are going to talk about a well-rounded, whole-foods diet assuming there are no medical reasons to eat otherwise.

Grocery-shopping days are the time to stock up on healthy food essentials, making the work week easier. Spend most of your time choosing foods from the perimeter of the store (produce, meat and refrigerated cases) and entering the aisles for things on your list, rather than grabbing chips or cookies because they look good.

## Protein

Protein makes up the building blocks of our muscular system and is important for lasting energy. You can get protein from a variety of meats, eggs and some dairy foods. When looking for non-meat protein, the choices are less but there are things like tofu, quinoa, edamame, lentils and beans. Soy milk, chia seeds, nuts and nut butter are other popular protein

staples to have on hand. Adding protein to a quick, between-clients snack is a sure way to keep your energy up during long workdays.

Try nut butter (the no-added-sugar kind) with fruit, or mix some chia seeds into your water or tea.

## Complex Carbohydrates

Not all carbohydrates are created equally. There are simple carbs and complex carbs. Carbohydrates aren't a bad thing in your diet as they are needed for energy, but too many simple carbs are. What's the difference between simple and complex carbohydrates? A simple carb is made up of processed and refined sugars. Examples are box cereals, cookies, soda, and anything made with white flour and sugar. Simple carbs are also found naturally in fruits.

Complex carbohydrates take the body longer to metabolize and therefore create longer-lasting energy. Some complex carbs to have at home are whole grains, beans, oatmeal, quinoa, barley and potatoes, to name a few.

The body will use carbohydrates for energy



first, followed by fats and proteins.

### Fats

Fats have been avoided in past decades when fad diets pushed low-fat eating. Conversely, in today's diets, it's commonplace to encourage higher dietary fat consumption. Similar to the two types of carbs, there are good and bad fats.

Fats to be included regularly in a healthy diet are found in foods such as avocados, nuts, seeds, fish and olive oil.

Examples of fats to be eaten sparingly are fatty meats, fried foods, whole-fat dairy products including ice cream, and foods cooked in lard.

Fat is needed for a healthy body, but eating the right kinds of fat as well as the correct amounts are what matters for long-lasting energy and feeling your best.

### A Word about Fiber

Fiber is vastly under-consumed by Americans. Upgrading your fiber intake will help bloating and sluggishness, and may help with weight loss.

Fiber is found in vegetables, fruits, seeds, whole grains and beans. When reading food labels, look for foods that contain more fiber than sugar. They're hard to find, but they are out there. Try adding more vegetables to your diet every day and a fruit or two and notice how much better your body feels.

### Meal Prep

The start of successful eating is planning ahead. There will need to be certain healthy foods in your home so you can meal prep or at minimum, grab high-quality food and go.

Meal prep is usually done in one day to cook, chop and package portions for the entire week. It doesn't take a lot of time once you have a routine, and you can make it more fun by doing it with a friend.

Batch cooking is taking all the foods you need for proteins or carbs and cooking them on prep day. This might look like making meatballs, making shredded chicken, cooking up a bunch of quinoa or roasting vegetables.

Wash and chop raw vegetables on your meal-prep day. (Most likely there won't be time to chop cauliflower and sweet peppers in the mornings before work, so having it done ahead of time will increase the chances those nutritious veggies get eaten.)

Once the cooking and chopping are done, you can store everything in glass containers in the refrigerator. Or if you want your meals ready for grab-n-go, place a protein, carb and healthy fat in each container. This is the ultimate (healthy) fast food!

If you have a refrigerator and microwave at work, your options for food may be different than if you

have a day of outcalls. If you're on the road, pack a cooler, utensils and hand sanitizer. Plan proteins that don't require reheating to eat. There are plenty of options to choose from.

### Grab-N-Go Options

Not a big cook? Try these healthy alternatives in a pinch:

- Beef jerky
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Plain yogurt with slivered almonds
- Apple slices with peanut butter
- Raw veggies with hummus

### Hydrate for Health

Many massage therapists recommend drinking more water to their clients—and it's a practice we should all take part in. Body functions move smoothly when the body has enough fluid. Drinking at least 64 ounces of water each day ensures energy levels stay high and even lessens hunger pains.

Try taking water into the treatment room with you and sipping during work if thirsty. Make it a habit to drink 8 ounces of water between each client and wake up in the morning drinking 8 ounces before doing anything else. There are lots of tricks to increasing your water intake without it feeling like a chore.

Once you understand why your body is craving sugar, it's easier to make another choice and pick a fruit or other food you brought to work with you that day.

### Beware Energy Crutches

Talking about nutrition and energy wouldn't be complete without mentioning two common energy crutches: sugar and caffeine.

Sugar, or sugary foods, provide the body with quick energy. On busy days, when you're feeling tired and have three more massages to get through, do you crave sugar? It is common for our bodies to crave quick energy when we haven't eaten enough or eaten frequently enough in a day.

Once you understand why your body is craving sugar, it's easier to make another choice and pick a fruit or other food you brought to work with you that day. Sometimes even drinking a glass of water will stop sugar cravings—and eating a nutrient-dense snack will give you a quick energy gain.

Coffee, tea, sodas and energy drinks are the

go-to caffeine sources when a quick pick-me-up is needed. While caffeine in small amounts is fine, it shouldn't be the normal way to control your energy levels. Eating well-rounded meals and snacks should be the priority, followed by good hydration and then a coffee or soda for enjoyment.

Energy levels stay high as long as blood sugar doesn't crash. Eat regularly to avoid blood sugar crashes and you won't need caffeine as often as you think.

### Healthy Eating Takeaway


If you try nothing else, try eating protein, carb, and fat at every meal. This well-balanced type of eating will raise your energy level and will keep you feeling full longer.

Keep it simple. Try some new proteins or go with what you know. Modify your go-to carbs into complex carbs where you can, like swapping out Ritz crackers for Milton's whole grain crackers and find a raw nut or two you like for fats.


### Feel Your Best

As massage therapists, we need our bodies feeling good and energy high to help our clients. Neglecting our nutrition leads to our focus being pulled from client-centered to ourselves because we don't have a body functioning optimally.

Plan ahead by shopping for the right foods and preparing them ahead of time. This means even with a hectic morning, your nutrition doesn't suffer. When it comes time to eat at work, you are ready with high-quality food to get through even the busiest of days.

Choose foods with purpose. Feed your body consciously and it will reward you. Making smart choices will keep your body ready for client after client and your body feeling its best. 

Angela Lehman (thefitmt.com) is a massage therapist of 25 years turned online educator, promoting fitness and nutrition for massage therapists. With her kinesiology degree specialized in nutrition, she trains therapists in healthy eating, exercise and body mechanics to prolong their careers. Visit thefitmt.com for a complimentary food guide and shopping list.

 Read "One Meal at a Time: 3 Dietary Guidelines You Can Easily Follow Now," by Karen Menehan, on [massagemag.com](http://massagemag.com).

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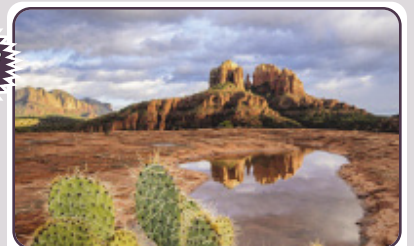
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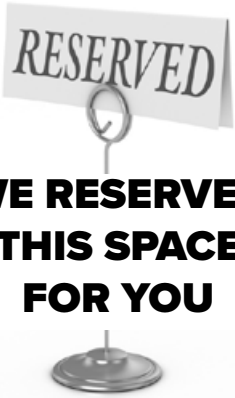
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