

# SOUND MIND, SOUND BODY COLUMN:

## Deep roots, many benefits

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Massage therapy is an ancient healing art, dating back thousands of years with the creation of Chinese, Thai or Ayurvedic massage.

As an interactive manipulation of muscle and connective tissue, massage therapy is truly beneficial for both the mind and the body. Massage can be compared to applying WD-40 to fix a squeaky door; the body also needs to be "oiled" for restoration and rejuvenation.

In modern day society, massage therapy is utilized to aid in stress relief, alleviate chronic conditions and sport specific injuries. From relieving chronic back pain and assisting in physical rehabilitation to decreasing depression, massage therapy is a form of body work that can prevent disease and ailments, and in some cases, eliminate the need for surgery.

Holiday Sloan, a licensed massage practitioner, specializes in therapeutic massage and trigger point therapy.

"Overworked and habitually tight muscles build toxins, solely because they lose the ability to release the cellular and environmental toxins," Sloan said.

Muscles that aren't functioning normally continuously store the toxins resulting in a "toxic buildup" that blocks oxygen and nutrients, she said.

"In addition, these restricted muscles will not receive the necessary nutrients required to function properly from food no matter how healthy and nutritious the diet," Sloan said. Employees in repetitive jobs, serious athletes, weekend warriors and mentally stressed-out individuals can benefit from the "toxic flush" provided by massage therapy.

Massage not only benefits physically, but mentally.

"During massage, there is an awareness of the body through the touch of the tender of painful area. Massage brings people back into their body, allowing them to be more attuned to what causes muscle tension. Eventually this awareness will help correct further tension and can prevent ailments entirely," Sloan said.

Throughout a session, people can feel the body "unlock" within tense areas. Self-

realization occurs in daily life noticing how muscles respond to stress and everyday activity. For some people it is a simple, but constant clench in the jaw, lift of the shoulders or hold of the breath.

Many people do not realize that the skeletal muscles of the body can work together to create or reduce ailments. A runner who has knee pain may not realize that "the cause" is coming from the hip or possibly the ankle region. Massage therapy "runs" the same by finding and working trigger points to release contractive muscles associated with a specific ailment.

The term known as "referral pain" creates a pain sensation in another part of the body away from the true source of the problem. For example, releasing a trigger point on the shoulder can alleviate headaches or neck pain.

Beyond the normal stress-busting release, massage therapy benefits the body on a deeper level. "Massage increases flexibility, blood circulation, the range of motion of joints and detoxes the lymphatic system which is basically your body's immune system.

The oils used in therapy nourish the skin with extra moisture, a light exfoliation and increased circulation." Sloan said.

Currently, there are more than 250 styles of massage, bodywork and somatic therapies. Sloan uses an unusual modality called "structural relief therapy". This massage style is popular among physical therapists and serves to neurologically "turn off" the habitually guarding or contracted muscles.

Each style of massage is unique to its own, but all having one thing in common: release of cellular toxins and enhancement of the deep relaxation of the mind and body.

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