

SELF-MASSAGE FOR PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL HEALING

By The American Institute of Health Care Professionals, Inc.



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Introduction

Healing the Physical Body

Some physical healing therapies go back thousands of years. Nearly 5,000 years ago, massage as a form of physical therapy was discussed in “The Yellow Emperor’s Classic Book of Internal Medicine.” This Chinese text was first released in 2,700 BC. Remarkably, it is still used today for massage therapy training, and includes techniques on acupressure, acupuncture and herbology.

A scant 200 years later Egyptians were adding paintings depicting massage therapy to tomb walls. From paintings, iconography and text, we know that the Egyptians created a form of massage that became the basis for today's Reflexology. That type of massage is used to treat illness and relieve tension, based on the thought that there are reflex points in your head, hands and feet which are linked to other parts of your body.

From China and Egypt massage began to spread across the globe, influencing Greek and Roman massage techniques. It wasn't until the 1800s that Swedish doctor and gymnast Per Henril Ling introduced massage to the Western world, producing what he called the Swedish Movement System. Today Swedish massage is one of the most popular forms of this ancient healing therapy.





The Evolution of Emotion

Human emotions and feelings have existed since the first human beings walked the earth. However, research into emotions is a relatively recent phenomenon. In 1871 geologist and naturalist Charles Darwin, famous for his contributions in the field of evolution, released "The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals".

He researched human emotion in an effort to support his theory of evolution. It was this early work by Darwin which led other respected scientists to study the evolution of emotion, and just what emotions actually are. We understand now that is important to look after your emotional health, as well as your physical well-being. The two are very closely linked. You can't have a healthy mind without a healthy body, and the opposite is true as well.

Though massage was created as a physical healing therapy, it can uniquely help the mind and body heal. This is true with the traditional massage experience, where you seek out a licensed or certified massage therapist. Emotional and physical healing can also be delivered by your own hands, through self-massage.



What is Self-Massage?

Self-massage is a pretty self-explanatory term. You give yourself a massage, rather than having someone else perform massage on you. Since a decent massage session is out of the reach of some people financially, this means you can still benefit from massage, performing the therapy yourself.

Self-massage is also attractive to some because they feel anxious, embarrassed or self-conscious about the traditional experience. This is when the client is either partially or totally nude, and the massage therapist is usually a stranger. This can create awkward feelings that are not the case with a self-massage session.

Self-massage can take place anywhere at any time. Young and old can benefit, males and females. Whenever you have a few minutes you can massage tired and aching joints, ligaments, tendons and muscles, improving your circulation and invigorating yourself at the same time.

Self-massage can be an important part of recuperation and rehabilitation after an injury, surgery or extended illness, or a simple daily tool for health maintenance.

Jennifer Durkin is an experienced massage therapist in Worcester, Massachusetts, in the United States. She points out that, "You don't need expensive equipment or lots of time," to enjoy a self-massage session that can heal your emotions and your body. As far as rewards are concerned, there are plenty of rather substantial benefits related to this form of massage therapy.





The Benefits of Self-Massage

There are a lot of great reasons to add self-massage to your daily and weekly schedules. The benefits are physical and emotional in nature. One of the smartest reasons for giving yourself a massage is that you get to know your body. In the 21st century, there is a lot of "body shaming" going on.

Men and women are made to feel embarrassed or ashamed if they don't have the "perfect body", as dictated by health and beauty manufacturers trying to sell their products. No one should be ashamed of their body. Everyone is uniquely different and beautiful, and should respect his or her physical makeup.

Self-massage helps you do exactly that.

Proper massage in the stomach area can help with digestion. Hippocrates, the Father of Modern Medicine, said thousands of years ago that, "All disease begins in the gut." While that absolute statement may not be exactly correct, nutritionists, gastroenterologists and other health experts do believe that the majority of diseases humans can develop have to do with an improperly functioning digestive system.

To massage for digestion benefits, Susan Harmsworth, founder of spa company ESPA, recommends you "... massage the ascending colon in a deep, finger kneading style, working your way upwards to just below the rib cage in a firm, circular motion." This is the area on the lower right side of your stomach, by your appendix. You then continue to move your motion across your stomach and down at the same time, moving to the lower left part of your stomach, near your pubic bone.

If you want to benefit from a healthy detox, deep tissue massage does the job. Unhealthy toxins and other poisons are removed from the body as your circulation improves. A sore neck or tense shoulders benefits from massaging the base of your big toes. This is a reflexology trigger point that also helps ward off headaches.

Are you looking for an emotional reset? Massage your feet, working your soles one foot at a time. Make a figure 8 pattern on the sole of your foot, and then move upwards from your heel. This relieves tension and delivers emotional balance.

Massaging yourself is a principal act of self-love and self-kindness. Simply employing a 10 or 20 minute a day habit of self-massage helps silence your chattering, nonstop inner voice, calms your mind and body, and can help put your life in perspective.

Since massage of any type can unblock energy channels, at the hands of another or yourself, a host of physical and emotional health conditions are improved, if not totally cured. Massage, as well as some other alternative and complementary healing therapies, is based on the ancient idea that there are specific "energy highways" in the human body.



When those pathways become blocked or jammed, your energy does not flow properly. This leads to mental, emotional and physical health problems, illnesses and disease. Massage keeps these energy highways flowing freely, your immune system stays strong and healthy, and you enjoy fewer health problems head to toe.

If you would like to turn back the clock and lessen the impact of father time, self-massage offers that benefit as well. Because of the detoxing and improved circulation you receive from massage, your skin and hair enjoy youthful vitality, strength, health and appearance. It should go without saying that massage is an excellent pain reliever, for any and all physical parts of your body.

When you begin to feel healthy physically, your mental and emotional states change for the positive. Proper self-massage techniques stimulate your internal organs, and your nervous system gets a boost. Your nervous system and your brain begin sending signals of health and well-being, and your emotional and spiritual feelings benefit.

Self-massage stimulates your lymphatic system, which means you effectively remove waste from your body. Massage can relieve and prevent muscle cramps and spasms, and improved blood circulation provides oxygen-rich nutrients and a healthy blood flow to all areas of your body. Your mental alertness is increased, you sleep better, and a few studies show that self-massage actually strengthens your 5 senses.

You have probably noticed how you enjoy better emotional control and a greater feeling of self-worth when you are physically healthy. When your emotions are in order, you feel more like taking care of your physical self. In these ways, and many others, your physical and emotional states of health are closely intertwined. Self-massage serves both masters, delivering a bevy of benefits.





Tools & Equipment Needed for Self-Massage

As massage therapist Jennifer Durkin pointed out, a lot of expensive fitness equipment is not required to benefit from self-massage. As far as extreme basics, you just need what you already have ... your body! To improve the experience and get the most out of self-massage, there are a few pieces of equipment you should consider picking up.

- **Massage Belts** - This electronic massage tool delivers benefits while you go throughout your normal daily routine. You can purchase variations with infrared heating elements, the belt operates hands-free, and some models include automatic shut-off if you fall asleep wearing them.
- **Massage Balls** - There are thousands of different massage balls available. They come in a variety of sizes and different degrees of firmness.
- **Still Point Inducer** - This product made by fitness manufacturer Still Point is the enemy of neck pain. You just lie down on your back, and place the Still Point Inducer underneath your neck. You want to align it with your spine, placing it at the base of your skull. You don't even need to move. Just lie still for 5 minutes, and a tight neck becomes loose, headaches and anxiety are relieved, as well as congestion and tension.



- **Foam Roller** - This is a self-massage "must have" item for working your legs, and is also used by many athletes to help work out tired muscles and prevent injury.
- **Massage Rollers** - Like the foam roller, other massage rollers physically knead and manipulate your body. Massage rollers come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and you may have to experiment to find one that suits you.



- **Foot Massager** – Some feet massagers are made of foam, some out of wood and some out of plastic. They almost always have ridges or knobs to massage the bottoms of your feet, and some include accessories and features like foot baths and heating elements.
- **Massage Oils** - Almond Oil, Jojoba Oil, Avocado Oil, Cocoa Butter, Grape Seed Oil, Sesame Oil, Olive Oil, Coconut Oil and Shea Butter all make excellent massage oils. They can be used as a base or carrier oil for essential oils that provide specific and unique health benefits.
- **Stick Massager** - This is a very weird-looking tool to the uninitiated. What it does is provide deep tissue massage benefits thanks to specially located knobs that allow you to release tension by stimulating specific trigger and reflexology points.

Common Self-Massage Techniques

In the benefits section of this report, we revealed a few massage techniques for different parts of your body. Here are a few more specific self-massage tips to get you started.

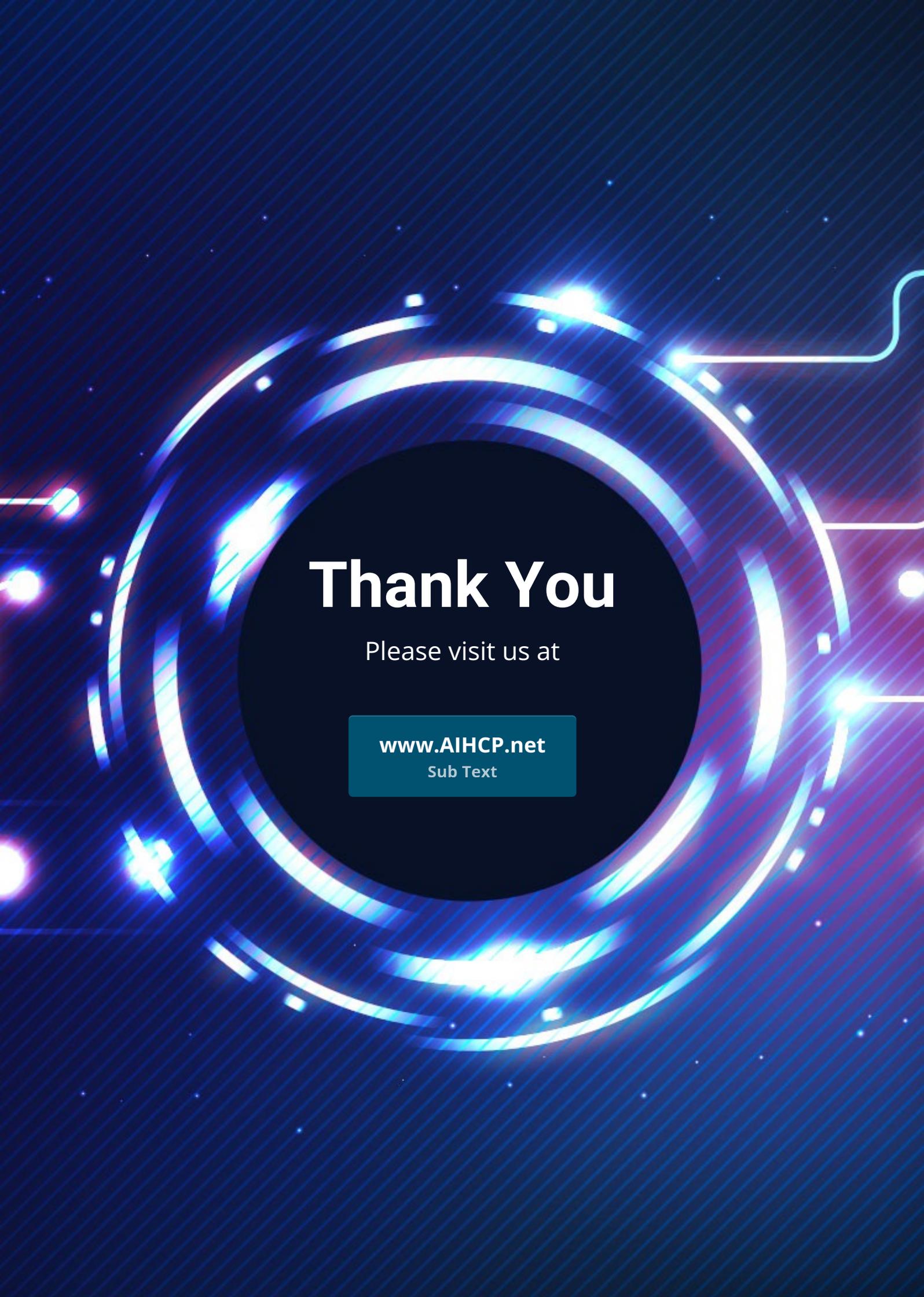
Feet – You can perform this simple self-massage technique using a common tennis ball or a spiked massage ball. You don't even have to leave your workstation or computer chair. While sitting, place the ball under your bare or stockinged foot. Simply roll back and forth from toe to heel, applying firm pressure.

Neck and shoulders – Place a tennis ball or a massage ball between your shoulder and the wall or some solid object. Raise your arm to your side, forming a 90° angle with your elbow. Move your head from side to side. Place the ball in multiple positions behind your neck and shoulders, and repeat on either side of your back or shoulders as needed.

Knees – If you sit too much during the day, or for long periods of time, your knees may develop "knots" in them. To work out the kinks, slide one foot forward in front of you while seated. Press your fingertip or knuckle into the indentations on either side of your kneecap and massage, making a star-shaped figure. Do this for 10 seconds, then straighten and bend your knees several times. Repeat 2 to 3 times with each leg.

Rear end - If your buttocks feels sore, from extended sitting or for whatever reason, try this. Sit on the floor with your knees bent. Place a tennis ball under each of the cheeks of your behind. Lift one leg off of the ground at a time, rolling around and using the tennis ball to massage your behind. Repeat on each side as necessary.

Back pain – Place a foam roller under your back and lie down on the floor. Rocking your body forward and backwards allows the foam roller to massage your back.



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