

The Passive Stretch Workbook 3rd Edition

Table Thai and more for the client on the massage table
(with supplemental stretches for the seated client and for self-stretching)

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It is only within the open space created by dialogue— whether conducted with our neighbors, with history, with nature or the cosmos — that human wholeness can be sustained. The closed silence of an autistic space can only become the site of spiritual suicide. We are not born human in any but a biological sense; we can only learn to know ourselves and others and thus be 'trained' in the ways of being human. We do this by immersion in the 'ocean of language and dialogue' fed by the springs of cultural tradition.

— Daisaku Ikeda
Claremont McKenna College, 1993



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Acknowledgments

Many of the following stretches are adapted from Traditional Massage of Thailand, which I practice and teach. Thai massage is done on a mat on the floor, so stretches done on a massage table are by definition not Traditional Thai massage, but many work well with some adjustments. I owe a great debt of gratitude to all my Thai massage teachers, in both North America and Thailand.

The first time I was introduced to Active Isolated Stretching in a weekend workshop with Aaron Mattes, I was particularly intrigued by his approach because of its similarity to Thai massage. The two modalities differ in many ways, since Thai massage involves stretching that is not Active, nor is it really Isolated. However, the way Mattes explains the stretch reflex created an “Aha!” moment for me, since he clarifies the logic behind the rhythm of the stretches in the ancient Thai massage tradition as I learned it. His approach is highly systematized and very effective and his book, *Active Isolated Stretching*, is an invaluable guide. I highly recommend it. The Saltwater Taffy method is adapted from both modalities.

All I know about fascial release I learned in massage school, based on John Barnes’ Myofascial Release work. I was drawn to this method because it makes perfect sense—it is painless for the client, and easy on the practitioner’s body. The fascial release approach in this book is adapted from his work. To pursue a comprehensive look at the theory of fascial release and find a thorough explanation of Barnes’ method, find information at www.myofascialrelease.com.

My favorite anatomy book is *Trail Guide to the Body* by Andrew Biel. I have found his flashcards to be particularly practical.

Mostly, I want to thank my peers who have generously shared their creative approaches using stretches to get clients out of pain, restore range of motion, facilitate increased flexibility, and release tension. I am so fortunate to be a part of the wonderful profession of massage therapy.

Introduction

Welcome to *The Passive Stretch Workbook*, in which we explore stretches for the client on the massage table. These stretches, gathered from many diverse sources, can be done with the client awake or asleep, draped or fully clothed. The photographs show the model clothed to provide clearer visuals, because admittedly, draping (for some of these moves) will take practice.

Depending on your goals, you may decide to use one or two of these stretches in the course of a massage, or create a whole routine using them all.

It is vital that you gain a basic understanding of the stretch reflex and the three types of stretching to which I refer in the following section, so please spend some time absorbing this information before you get started. A review of anatomy is also extremely helpful, since a basic understanding of the origin and insertion of the muscles you are targeting enables you to stretch them most effectively.

A note of caution: Our motto while doing this work is, **if it hurts, don't do it**. This applies to you as a practitioner as well as to your client. Alternatively, you can modify a stretch or do fewer repetitions. There are some moves that you will incorporate right away in your work, some that you will need only occasionally for specific treatment work, and others that you may discard right away because of discomfort. Please get plenty of feedback from clients in the beginning, listen to your own body, and be especially careful to use good body mechanics.

The Stretch Reflex

Within every muscle and tendon in our bodies are built-in mechanisms that constantly measure the length of the muscle, the speed at which that length is changing, and the force applied to the muscle. Beneath our level of conscious thought, these mechanisms, collectively known as the stretch reflex, constantly monitor tension levels so as to deliver the exact amount needed to climb a step, open a window, or play a chord on the piano.

Can you stand perfectly still? Close your eyes and give it a try. Before long you will notice that you are moving slightly. As the muscles of your lower extremities lengthen on one side, the stretch reflex acts to alert the brain to contract those muscles before you fall over. With the stretch reflex constantly correcting, you will gently sway in every direction, nevertheless remaining upright.

Our muscles are strong enough to pull themselves right off the bones, but the stretch reflex keeps them attached in two important ways. The first is via the muscle spindle fibers, which cue the muscles to exert force to counter the stretch. When the doctor asks you to sit on the edge of the examination table and relax your leg, then taps the patellar tendon with a rubber mallet, he or she is “checking your reflexes.” When the mallet hits the tendon it is effectively exerting a sudden stretching force to the quadriceps. The stretch reflex, in a healthy response, acts immediately to return the muscles to their natural resting length by exerting a counter force, thereby resisting the stretch and causing your leg to extend. If a stretch is gradual, rather than sudden, the reflex arc is the same, only slower, matching the speed of the stretch.

Another way the stretch reflex works is to inhibit the muscles by releasing the tension when the workload is too great. The mechanism for facilitating this response is the golgi tendon apparatus. If you have picked up a box full of bowling balls that is too heavy for you, your muscles will simply give out so that you drop the box rather than have your arms fall off, thanks to the stretch reflex. Also, the same mechanism causes the muscles to relax during a sustained stretch, signaling the end of the stretch reflex response, when the muscles are safely habituated to the new length.

The basic function of the stretch reflex, then, is to monitor the tension needed for posture and movement, and to protect the body from injury. We have no conscious control over the stretch reflex.

If the stretch reflex inhibited movement right away, however, we would not be able to move at all without resistance. Instead, there is a two-second window before the stretch reflex kicks in during normal movement. When you hold a stretch, after two seconds the stretch reflex automatically resists your efforts, contracting the very muscles you are trying to stretch in order to keep them attached to the bones, to protect the body from injury. When the muscles habituate to the new length, after 15 or 20 seconds, the stretch reflex releases.

So, in order to lengthen the muscles effectively, you must make a decision either to wait out the stretch reflex by holding the stretch for longer than 15 or 20 seconds, or avoid the reflex entirely by completing the stretch in less than two seconds.

The Three Types of Stretching

The 30-second Stretch

This stretch involves holding for at least 30 seconds, in order to wait for the stretch reflex to release and then allow the muscles to lengthen during the last 10 to 15 seconds or more.

The Saltwater Taffy Method

Using the two-second window before the stretch reflex kicks in, we take the client's body into a position in which the targeted muscles are lengthened to a comfortable limit. We then silently say "Saltwater Taffy," which takes less than two seconds. Then we release the stretch, bringing the body part to a neutral, mid-range position. Then we repeat the stretch. The client commonly experiences an increase in the comfortable range with each repetition. To maintain flexibility, three repetitions will do. To affect lasting change in the muscle length, a stretch needs to be done eight to ten times.

Although this method may seem strange at first, it feels quite natural to the recipient. Observe a cat or dog in the throws of a luxurious stretch after a nap; right about the time you finish saying "Saltwater Taffy," the stretch will be completed.

The Saltwater Taffy method has many advantages. For one, the movement facilitates the pumping of synovial fluid into the joints, lubricating them nicely as well as stimulating circulation and lymphatic drainage. Also, because each move is done at least three times, both the practitioner and client can see improvement of the range of motion in a joint with each repetition. Results are often dramatic.

The Fascial Release Method

What is Fascia?

What exactly is fascia? We explain it to clients in creative ways, such as evoking the chicken breast — when you separate the compartments of the meat you see a shiny, white sheet. That's fascia; a three-dimensional web that encases every bone, organ, blood vessel, muscle group, fiber and cell in our bodies, creating our structure. It winds and courses throughout our bodies, forming tendons, separating, connecting and confining the structures therein. It also functions like a net, creating a matrix through which nerves and blood vessels easily pass.

When traumatized, fascia tightens, much like a wool sweater that you put through the dryer and then squeezed yourself into. When restricted due to postural habits, trauma or repetitive stress, the fascial matrix pulls tight and adversely affects the function of muscles, nerves, and blood vessels.

Fascia includes three components. The first, collagen, is what forms scar tissue. Muscles do not repair themselves with new muscle tissue, but with scar tissue, rich in collagen. With the tensile strength of a radial tire, these fibers stick to all surrounding tissue to restore the integrity of the structure in case of an injury. The second component is elastin, which enables the fascia to

stretch, and is particularly useful in tendons, connecting muscle to bone. The third component is ground substance—our focus when we do fascial release, since it is the most amenable to change.

Ground Substance

Ideally, sheets of fascia that cover, separate and enclose muscles should be malleable, smooth and mobile. The ground substance, mostly water, is a gelatinous liquid that, when stressed, becomes sticky, sometimes solid, and restricts movement. Our goal in doing fascial release is to restore fluidity to the ground substance. This takes time.

Targeting the fascia rather than the musculotendinous unit requires a different approach altogether. In order to soften the fascia and effect a change in the tissues we must take our time. We arrange the joint to aim the fascia in a lengthened position, hold gently and then we wait and wait. You may feel a release after only one minute or so, but if we want the change to last, we must hold for at least three minutes.

The pressure you exert on the three-to-five minute hold can be quite light, since positioning the client's body is the key. The process should be easy and comfortable for you and your client, or you are working too hard. Using good body mechanics is of paramount importance.

This type of stretching can have dramatic effects in specific therapeutic applications, which we will explore.

How do I decide which method to use?

Choosing a stretching method depends on your goals, the part of the body on which you are working, and the comfort level of you and your client during the stretch. There is no right answer for every situation. If your goal is to maintain flexibility and enhance circulation in the course of a wellness treatment, three repetitions of a Saltwater Taffy stretch will do. If, however, the client is experiencing pain, stiffness, and/or limited range of motion, and your goal is to restore the muscles to their natural resting length, you need to do eight to ten repetitions of the Saltwater Taffy stretches in order for the muscles to “remember” the change so that the effect will last.

If too much movement is adding to discomfort, increasing muscle guarding, or just annoying the client, then holding the stretch is a better option. Some clients react to movement of the head, for instance, by resisting and tightening the very neck muscles you are targeting. Some clients lack the body awareness to relax enough to allow you to move them. We all have ways to encourage our clients to relax, and our efforts to do so are vital in order for any stretch to be effective. If neither the Saltwater Taffy repetitions nor the 30-second stretch yields results, if the problem is particularly persistent, or in an area of the body where the fascia is quite resistant, then fascial release work is indicated. We all have clients with multiple issues for whom we would love to have time to carefully and thoroughly address each one. We negotiate with the client, educating him or her as to what can be done in the confines of one appointment, and what will need more work later. You will find, however, that stretching can be faster and sometimes just as effective as deep tissue work, saving your fingers and thumbs, creating a more pleasant experience for your client and maximizing your treatment time.

Remember, although the text is specific about what type of stretch to use, it is only a suggestion. If you decide to replace all the Saltwater Taffy stretches with a 30-second hold, or you are treating a stubborn problem and choose to hold any of the stretches for three minutes or more to release the fascia, feel free.

Passive Stretches

THE PRONE POSITION

Place a bolster under the client's ankles.

1. JEANS POCKETS PRESS: To stretch the low back, stand at your client's head and walk down the back with full hand contact on either side of the spine. Walk past the waist and onto the Gluteals, where his or her jeans pockets would be. Maintain full hand contact and push toward the feet. Hold perfectly still for 30 seconds, then walk slowly back toward the shoulders.

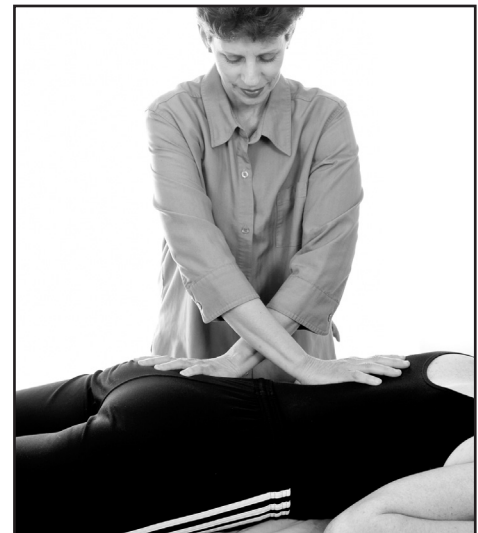
This series of stretches targets some of the hard-working low back muscles that allow us to walk upright, including the Erector spinae group (the two thick columns on either side of the spine), and Quadratus lumborum, which is often implicated in low back pain.

Note: "South" means toward the client's feet. "North" is toward the client's head.

2. ONE-SIDE LOW BACK: Place your south hand on the lower ribs on the side on which you are standing. Place the other hand on the Gluteals. Push your hands apart and hold for at least 30 seconds. Release very slowly.

If your client has low back issues, you may choose to hold for at least three minutes to release the fascia. Remember, little force is needed to release the fascia. So, rather than pushing hard, lean comfortably, allowing the body to support your weight as if you were resting.

Note: As an alternative position, you may use the soft surface of your forearms as shown, pushing down and apart.



3. BOTH-SIDES LOW BACK: Place your north hand on the sacrum and your other hand on the lower ribs, with your forearms crossing. Push your hands apart and hold for at least 30 seconds. You may also substitute your forearms as with the previous stretch. Once again, if your client has low back issues, you may choose to hold for at least three minutes to release the fascia. Remember, very little force is needed for fascial release.



*alternative
position*



4. KITTEN SQUEEZE: Have you ever watched a mother cat pick up a kitten by the scruff of the neck? The hapless kitten goes limp. That is the idea here, to relax the upper Trapezius, Levator scapula, and all the other muscles that we use to hunch our shoulders. Reach across the body and squeeze the tissue, ask for feedback on terms of pressure and placement, and hold perfectly still for 30 seconds. You are pushing the heel of your hand toward your fingers, holding your hands firmly in place, grasping as much tissue as you can, resisting the temptation to pull back towards you. Sometimes you can feel the point at which the muscles just give it up. Release slowly, with a deep breath. Repeat on the other side.



For the following two moves, stand to the side of the client, facing the client's feet, and bend the knee of the client's nearest leg at an 80-degree angle. Imagine a pair of eyes on the kneecap. When the eyes are looking in toward the other leg, the leg is internally rotated. When the eyes are looking out toward you, the leg is externally rotated.

5. EXTERNAL ROTATORS OF THE HIP: Using your outside hand, bring the foot toward you so that the leg is internally rotated, which stretches the external rotator muscles of the hip. Your other hand is gently stabilizing the hip. The muscles stretched here include Piriformis (deep to Gluteus maximus), which is often implicated in low back pain because of its location relative to the sciatic nerve. Stop when your client says "enough." Hold, say "Saltwater Taffy," and release. Repeat two more times. **Stop if your client experiences knee pain.**



6. INTERNAL ROTATORS OF THE HIP: Using your outside hand, push the foot away from you until your client says “enough.” Your north hand is resting quietly. Here, you are stretching the internal rotators of the hip. Hold, say “Saltwater Taffy,” and repeat two more times. With practice, you will be able to feel the point at which the resistance dictates that you stop, but in the beginning (to be on the safe side), get feedback from your client with every stretch. **Stop if your client experiences knee pain.**

In a very flexible person, the straight leg may be in the way, preventing a deeper stretch. In this case, the client may already have a normal range of motion and you can leave well enough alone.

From now on, when a stretch is repeated, hold it, say “Saltwater Taffy” and release, whether or not this is specified in the text.

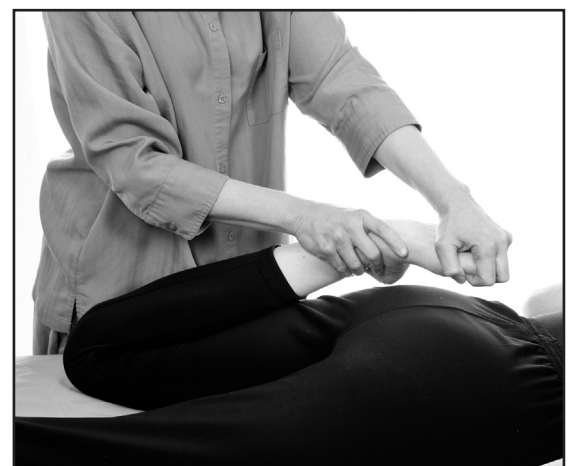
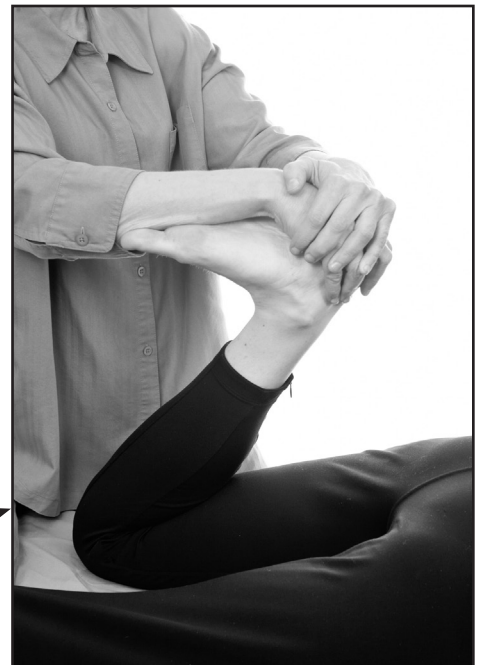
As always, in the course of a wellness treatment, three repetitions of each stretch will do. You also have the option of alternating, going between internal and external rotation, moving the leg as if you are operating a slot machine. However, if your goal is to do specific treatment work, releasing the Piriformis for example, you need to perform eight to ten repetitions. Or, hold for at least 30 seconds.

REPEAT BOTH MOVES ON THE OTHER LEG.

7. MAKE A “Z”: Although the Quadriceps are the main targets here, the calf muscles, which include the powerhouse Soleus and the more superficial Gastrocnemius, get a gentle stretch as well with this move. Grasp the dorsiflexed foot of the client and push toward the butt three times, Saltwater Taffy. Simultaneously push downward quite firmly on the ball of the foot, dorsiflexing, to maximize the stretch.

8. QUADS BASIC: To stretch the extensors of the knee, plantarflex the foot, bend the knee, and push the foot toward the butt, curling the toes as you do so, three times, saying “Saltwater Taffy.” Again, as with all stretches, whether you do three reps, eight reps, or hold 30 seconds or more depends on your goals as a therapist.

Plantar flexion adds a bonus stretch for the anterior compartment of the shin which encases Tibialis anterior, Extensor hallucis longus, and Extensor digitorum longus. You will notice in some cases that the foot wants to “sickle,” or invert as you push it. Just allow it to do so.



9. QUADS INTERMEDIATE: For a more intensive stretch for the Quads, place your south hand under the knee. With your north hand on the curled toes of the plantar-flexed foot, lift the knee three times, Saltwater Taffy, by rocking your own body northwards. If it is comfortable for you, place your north knee on the butt. This stabilizes the pelvis, maximizing the stretch.



10. QUADS MAX: For an even more intense stretch for the Quads, tuck the toes (not the whole foot) of one foot behind the bent knee of the other leg, thus positioning the pelvis for maximum effectiveness. Standing on the side of the un-tucked foot, with your north hand over the toes, lift the knee three times, Saltwater Taffy, as you lift the knee. If possible, stabilize the low back by placing your north knee on the butt.



REPEAT ON THE OTHER LEG.

11. CROSS TOES PUSH: Move the knees slightly apart, plantar flex the feet, and place one foot on top of the other right at the first joint of the big toe. With your fingers curling the toes, push firmly to the butt three times, Saltwater Taffy. Cross the other way and repeat. Although this move stretches the Quads, we are mainly targeting the shin muscles: Tibialis anterior, Extensor hallucis longus, and Extensor digitorum longus.



12. CROSS ANKLES PUSH: Cross at the ankles and push toward the butt three times. Cross the other way and repeat. As with the previous move, we are targeting the shin muscles, as well as the muscles that evert the foot, including the Peroneals.



13. BICYCLE THE HIPS: To relax the hips, stand at your client's head. Place one hand firmly on each hip right where the jeans pockets would be. Circle quickly and vigorously, one at a time, setting up a rocking rhythm that dances the pelvis. Move your own body so that you are dancing together. Continue for as long as you like.



14. HEEL PULL: To gently stretch the low back, stand at the foot of the table and pull both heels toward you three times.



15. CLOCK-FACE SHOULDER RELEASE: This move mobilizes the shoulder joint, stretching all the muscles that attach to the scapula.

Bring one arm straight out to the side to the three o'clock position. Tuck your north arm under the client's arm so that you are elbow to elbow. Stabilize the forearm with your other hand and gently pull the arm toward you three times, Saltwater Taffy.



Move the arm northwards to the two o'clock position and repeat.



Move the arm northwards one more time to the one o'clock position, as close to the ear as possible without discomfort, and repeat.



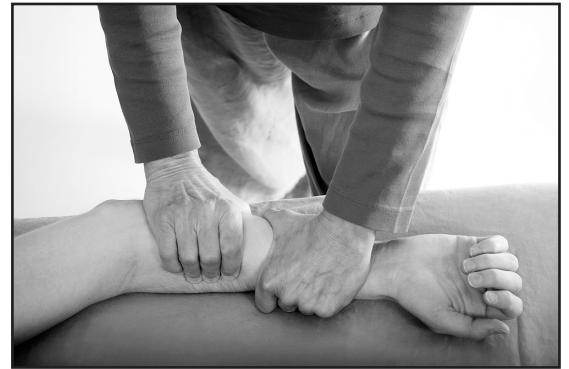
To target Pectoralis major and minor more effectively, repeat all three positions, this time lifting the elbow toward the ceiling while pressing the scapula toward the table to stabilize.



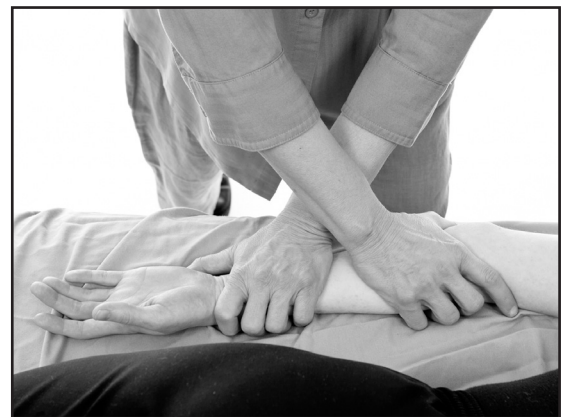
16. DRAGONFLY: Place client's hand behind the head. While stabilizing the shoulder blade with your hand, use your other hand to lift the elbow three times to stretch Pectoralis major and minor, Coracobrachialis, and anterior Deltoids. From the opposite side, stabilize the shoulder blade with your south hand, grasp the elbow and lift it three times to target Pectoralis major and minor. Make sure to keep the client's wrist aligned, preventing it from jamming into his or her head.



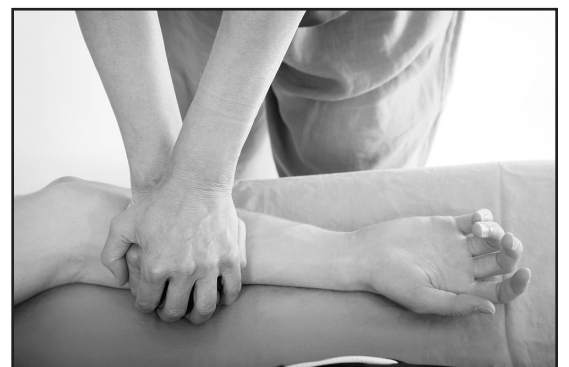
17. WRING THE FLEXORS: Grasp the forearm with your hands side by side, very slightly apart. Wring as if squeezing water out of a towel, one hand moving one way and the other hand going in the opposite direction. Wring the opposite way as well, working up and back down the forearm.



18. FOREARM: To stretch the flexors of the wrist and hand, place the arm palm up by the client's side, cross your wrists and push your hands apart, stretching the forearm three times.



19. FLEXOR PUSHAWAY: With the heels of your hands, push the soft tissue of the flexors away from you in a slow rhythm as if you are kneading bread, moving up and down the forearm.

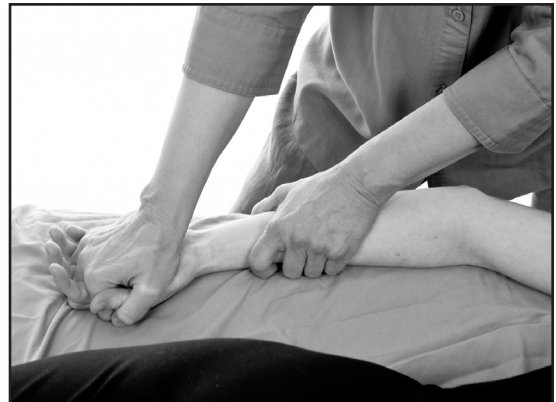


20. FLEXOR ELBOW WALK: Take a walk with your elbows up the flexors, taking one big step with one elbow, then a smaller step with the other elbow to fill in.



Experiment with wringing: Place your elbows about one inch apart, draw one towards you as you simultaneously push the other one away, then reverse the roles of the respective elbows, working your way up and back down the flexors.

21. WRIST: Place your south hand on the client's palm and grasp the mid-forearm with your north hand. Push the hand away from you as you pull the forearm toward you three times to stretch the wrist.



REPEAT ALL MOVES ON THE OTHER ARM.

SIDE-LYING POSITION

Place a lofty pillow under the client's head and ask him or her to roll to the side. Place one or two pillows under the bent knee for comfort.

22. LEMON SQUEEZES: To gently massage the Gluteals and External rotators of the hip, interlace your fingers and squeeze the muscles with the heels of your hands, describing an arc circling behind the Greater Trochanter of the femur.

Go to the other side of the table and continue lemon squeezes down the iliotibial band to the knee and back, lifting up, away from the bone.



23. ELBOW WALK: Staying in the same half-moon shaped area behind the greater trochanter, walk with your elbows, alternating.

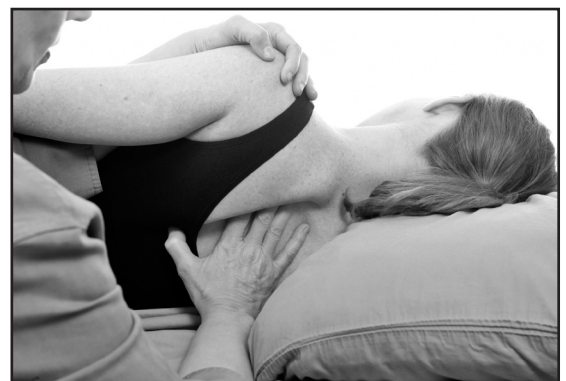
Try wringing as well: Place your elbows about one inch apart, draw one towards you as you simultaneously push the other one away, then reverse the roles of the respective elbows, working your way around the posterior hip.



24. SUBSCAP POINTS: Sit down. Place the client's bent arm so that the elbow rests slightly behind him or her. Reach under and support the shoulder with your inside hand and gently pull it toward you as you use the other hand to press points just deep to the scapula along the medial border, rolling the edge of the bone over your parked fingers or thumb, whichever is more comfortable for you. Hold each point for Saltwater Taffy.

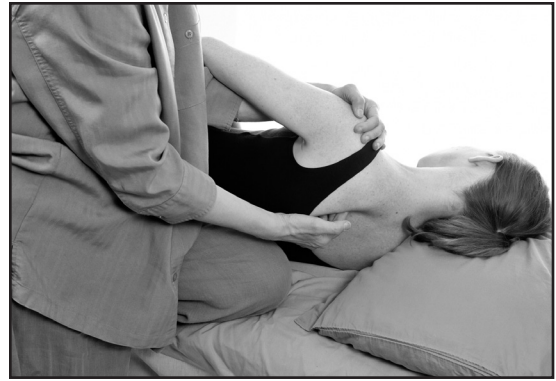
Now repeat, this time rocking the whole shoulder north and southwards in an arc with every point.

This move stretches the Trapezius, Rhomboids, Levator scapula, and the other muscles that move the scapula.



25. SCAPULA LIFT: Maintaining your grip on the shoulder with your inside forearm under the client's upper arm, reach under the shoulder blade with the fingers of your other hand and lift with both hands up and southwards, away from the neck.

This move also stretches the Trapezius, Rhomboids, Levator scapula, and the other muscles that move the scapula.



26. TEETER TOTTER: Reach under the client's arm and clasp your hands in front of the ball of the shoulder joint. Use the soft part of your forearm to roll into the soft tissue of the low back muscles. As you do so, open up the client's chest by pulling it towards you, gently stretching the chest muscles, moving your forearm up towards the ribs and back down as many times as you like.

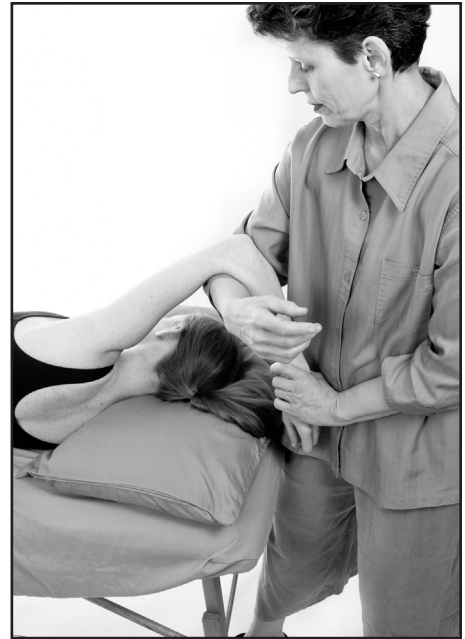


27. NECK STRETCH: With your inside arm tucked under the upper arm and your hand on the shoulder, place your other hand on the occiput and push three times as you simultaneously pull the shoulder towards you.

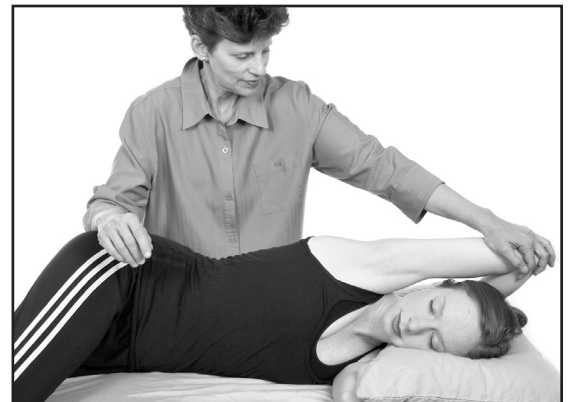
This move targets the neck muscles, including Levator scapula, Trapezius, Splenius Capitis, and Sternocleidomastoid.



28. ELBOW TO ELBOW: To stretch the long head of Triceps, Serratus anterior, Latissimus dorsi, and Teres major, bring the client's arm overhead, lock the crease of your elbow (either one) into the crease of the client's, and lean straight back three times, stabilizing the forearm with your other hand.



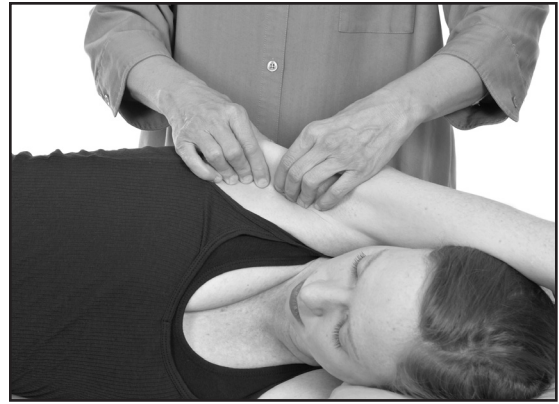
29. TRICEPS: Place the client's hand behind the head, fingers facing his or her shoulder. With your south hand or forearm on the hip, use your north hand to push the upper arm downwards toward the table three times. Reach up and knead Triceps.



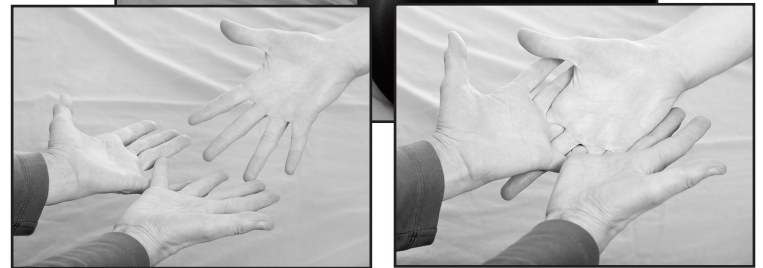
30. TRICEPS SQUEEZE: Stand at the client's elbow and lemon squeeze to the south end of the scapula and back.



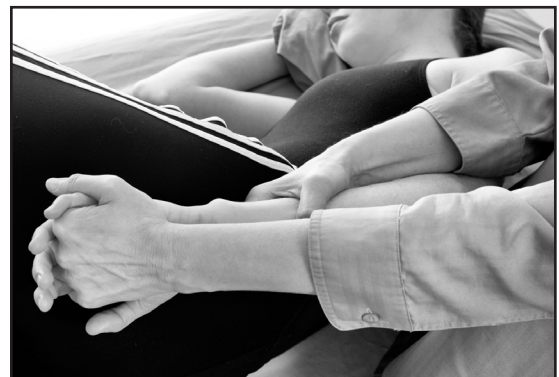
31. SCAPULA SQUEEZE: With the arm extended, squeeze and knead along the scapular border to stretch Teres major, Latissimus Dorsi and Subscapularis.



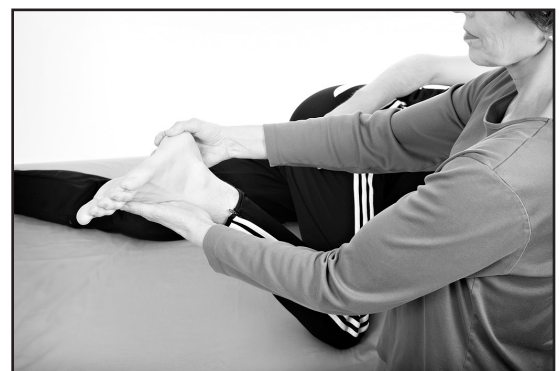
32. HANDCUFFS: Place the client's hand behind his or her back. Medially rotate the client's upper hand as if you were going to handcuff him or her. With the back of his or her hand pushing against the Gluteals, interlace your fingers and knead and stretch the palm, walking with the flat pads of your thumbs, targeting the flexors of the fingers and the other intrinsic muscles of the hand.



33. WRIST: With the fingers of your south hand interlaced with those of the client and your north hand grasping the forearm, stretch three times by pulling your hands apart. This move stretches the flexors of the wrist and hand.



34. HEEL LIFT: To stretch the external rotators of the hip, keep the upper leg parked (support with a pillow if necessary for comfort) and bent at slightly less than a 90 degree angle. The bottom leg is straight. Lift the heel toward the ceiling three times, getting feedback each time ("say when").



35. LOW BACK TWIST: Place the client's elbow behind the waist. Place your north hand on the client's chest, next to the shoulder joint. Place your other hand or the soft side of your forearm on the Gluteals. Push the butt as you open the chest toward you three times. **If at any time you hear the back adjust, stop.** For a more intense stretch, drop the top leg off the edge of the table. This stretch targets the paraspinal muscles.



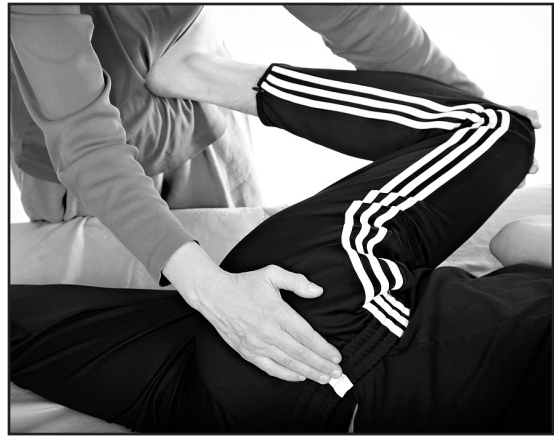
36. HIP FLEXORS: To target Iliopsoas, stand behind the client, reach under the top leg, keeping the leg bent, grasp the knee, and cradle the leg. Place the soft side of your forearm in the Gluteals and push to stabilize the pelvis. Simultaneously pull the leg back until your client feels a stretch, three times or more, depending on your goal.



37. QUADRICEPS: From behind the client, support the lower leg with your body. You are targeting the extensors of the leg. With your north hand, stabilize the hip. This is a two-part stretch: with your south hand, pull the leg back, then push the foot toward the hip with your body. Extending at the hip stretches Rectus femoris; flexing the knee includes the Vasti muscles.



38. PELVIC ROCK: To stretch the low back, face the client and plant his or her foot on your outside hip. Grasp the back of the pelvis and tilt it posteriorly in a streamlined move as you lunge carefully toward the chest, three times, supporting the knee with your other hand.



39. HAMS ON THE SIDE: Stand in front of the client south of the leg and lift it, supporting the knee.

This is a two part move:

First, push the knee to the chest.

Second, extend the knee to a comfortable limit, stretching the Hamstrings

To intensify the stretch for the very flexible client, use your inside hand to pull the Quads toward you as you extend the leg.

Repeat two more times.



REPEAT THE SIDE-LYING ROUTINE ON THE OTHER SIDE.

SUPINE POSITION

Bolster your client's knees. The following move is for specific treatment work for plantar fasciitis:

40. PLANTAR FASCIA: The foot has two arches; the following moves address each one. To release the fascia you need to hold each one for a minimum of three minutes. The hold can be very gentle. You are simply positioning the bones and waiting for the fascia to soften and release on its own.

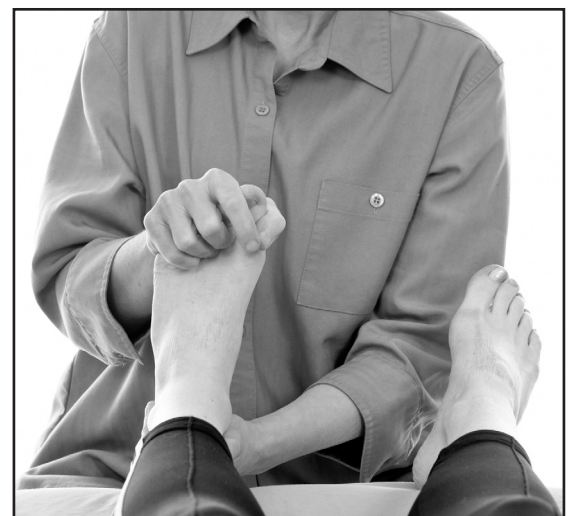
TRANSVERSE ARCH RELEASE: Sit facing the top of your client's foot and place it in your lap. Grasp the ball of the foot with both hands as if you were holding a paperback book and reading it. Open up the ball of the foot as if you were exposing its insides. The foot will dorsiflex naturally as you do so. With just your fingers pulling gently away from the center, hold perfectly still for at least three minutes. Release very slowly.

LONGITUDINAL ARCH RELEASE: Sit facing the top of the foot and place it in your lap. Clasp your hands and pull the foot into dorsiflexion and hold perfectly still for at least three minutes. Release very slowly.



The next five moves are best done without a bolster.

41. ROTATE FOOT: Have a seat at the feet. Hold the foot with the heel nestled in your inside hand. With your other hand, grasp the foot by cupping the toes and rotate, giving a stretch to the leg at the same time, three or more times in each direction, mobilizing the bones and the many complex structures of the foot and ankle.



42. HIP PULL: With your inside hand cupping the heel, rotate the foot laterally and grasp the arch with your outside hand. Lean back, gently lengthening the entire leg and creating some space in the hip joint, stretching the muscles that cross the hip and ankle joints. Take care to position the foot first, *then* pull back to protect the knee (avoid pulling and twisting simultaneously). Repeat for a total of three times.



Switch hands, cradling the heel with your outside hand. Rotate the foot medially, grasp the top of the foot with your inside hand, and lean back three times. Take care to position the foot first, *then* pull back to protect the knee (avoid pulling and twisting simultaneously). This move stretches the Peroneals.



REPEAT THE PREVIOUS TWO MOVES ON THE OTHER FOOT.

43. PALM PRESS, ANKLES TO TOES: Stand up and place the feet in a neutral position. Start just south of the ankles and push straight down toward the table. Move out over the toes, curling them, and repeat, then move back to the original position and push down one more time. This move stretches the extensors of the ankle and the toes, including Tibialis anterior, Extensor digitorum longus, and Extensor hallucis longus.



44. PUSHAWAY: Grasp the toes and push the feet toward the shins three times to stretch the calves. Give it all you've got.

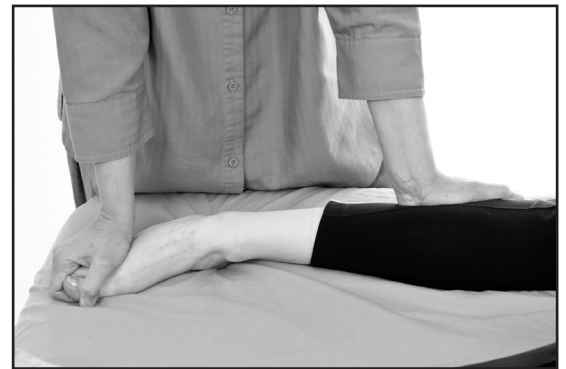


45. CROSSED FEET PRESS: Careful to cross the feet right at the first joint on the big toe (not the ball of the foot), press toward the floor three times. Reverse the feet and repeat. This move also stretches the anterior compartment, or “shin splint” muscles, which include Tibialis anterior, Extensor hallucis longus, and Extensor digitorum longus.



You may now bolster the knees.

46. SHIN SHIMMY: Keep the foot inverted. With your inside hand, stabilize the foot. Use the heel of your other hand to compress the shin muscles, moving from the ankle to the knee and back.

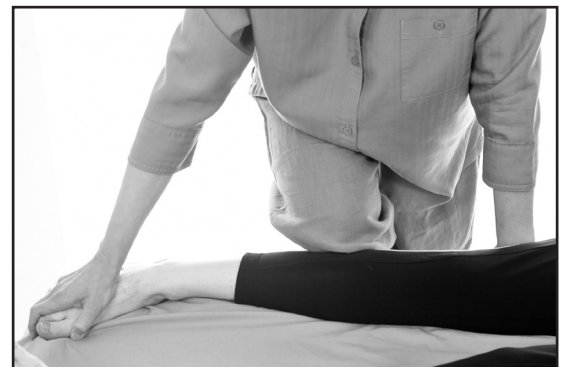


Keep the foot inverted. With your elbows, carefully take a walk up the shin muscles, staying just lateral to the ridge of the tibia. Take a big step with one elbow, then a small step with the other to fill in.

Experiment with “wringing” the shin muscles by placing elbows about one inch apart and pushing one away from you as you draw the other one toward you.

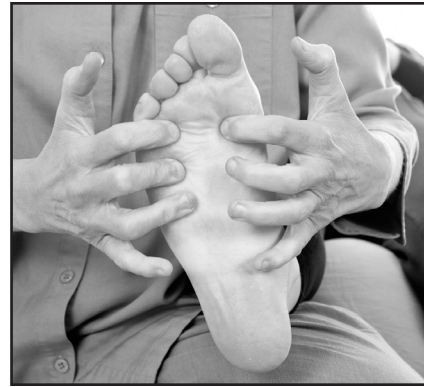


You can also use your knee to “walk” up the shin muscles, keeping the foot inverted with your south hand.



REPEAT ON THE OTHER SHIN.

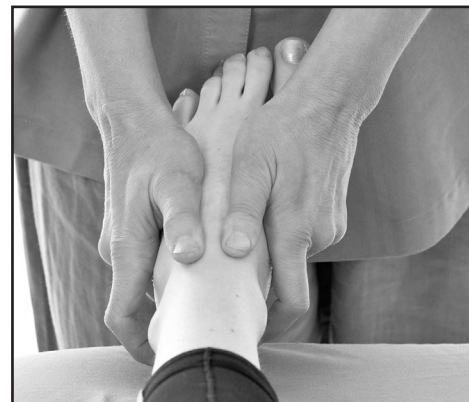
47. MUSICAL FEET: Working the flexors of the toes and the intrinsic muscles of the feet, walk with your fingertips on the sole of the foot as if you are playing scales on the piano, leaning back so that you are pulling the foot toward you with each “note,” thereby giving the calf a gentle stretch as well.



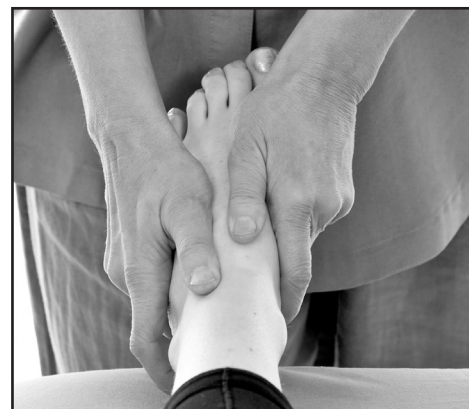
48. TOE YOGA: To further stretch the Extensors and Flexors of the toes, grasp the big toe and toe number two. Stretch them apart forward and back, then apart sideways, then cross one over the other, then cross the other way. Walk, walk, stretch apart, cross, cross. Repeat with toes two and three, then three and four, then four and five.



49. FOOT FOLD OVER: Stand at the end of the table. To mobilize the bones of the foot, grasp the top of the foot firmly on both sides and fold it over your fingertips (without moving across the skin), as if you are holding a frozen ice pop with two sticks and you are breaking it in half.



50. BICYCLING THE FOOT: To further mobilize the bones of the foot, grasp firmly on both sides and without moving across the skin, move your hands one at a time like bicycle pedals. Re-place your hands and repeat.



51. WRINGING THE FOOT: Have a seat. To mobilize the bones of the foot, hold it like you would a baseball bat, with the sole facing you. Without moving across the skin, wring the foot one way with one hand and the other way with the other hand. Keep going, flapping your elbows like a very slow bird.



52. SNAPPING TOES: From a seated position, cup the heel of one foot with your inside hand. Use the other hand to rotate each toe in brisk circles several times in each direction.

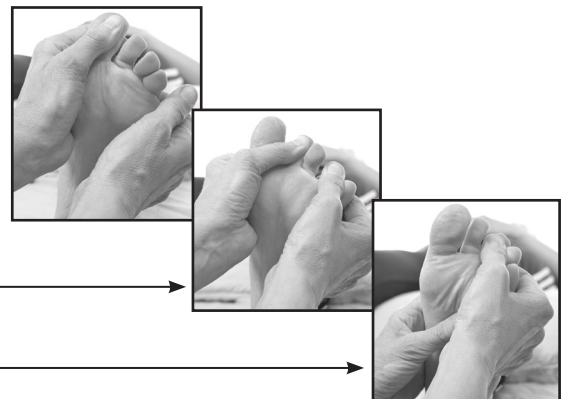
Then, hold the distal joint of the toe firmly with the second segment of your first two fingers and pull gently toward you. Be forceful but not fast. Do not yank. Release the tension. Then, move to the very tip of the toe. See if you can make a snapping sound with your fingers by quickly pulling upward, off the end of the toe.



53. TOE SPREAD: Starting with the big toe and the pinky toe, spread back and apart, as if rubbing a penny, past the tips.

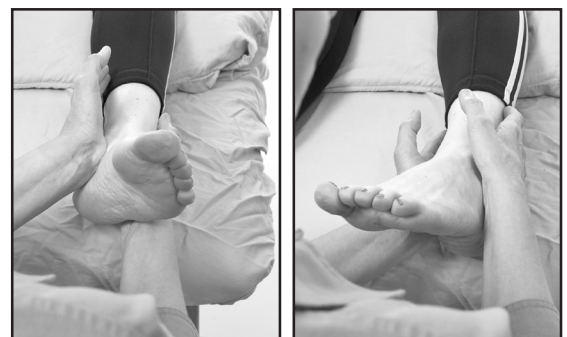
Do the same with the second and fourth toe,

then the third toe.



54. ANKLE BOOGIE: Place the heels of your hands distal to the ankle bones. Vigorously move the ankle so that the foot waves merrily at you.

REPEAT ON THE OTHER FOOT.



55. AROUND THE WORLD: To mobilize the hip joint, gently circle the leg several times each way, allowing your own body to move with it.



56. IMPINGEMENT RELIEF: To avoid a pinching sensation at the hip with flexion due to a painful impingement of the muscle tendons experienced by some clients, here are a few suggestions.

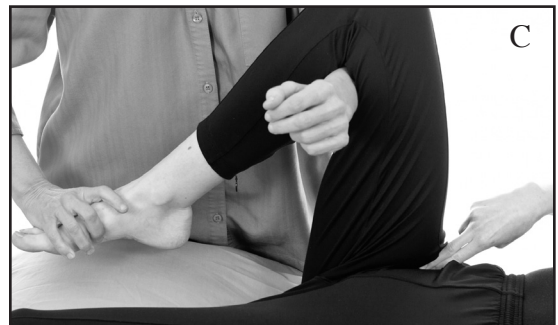
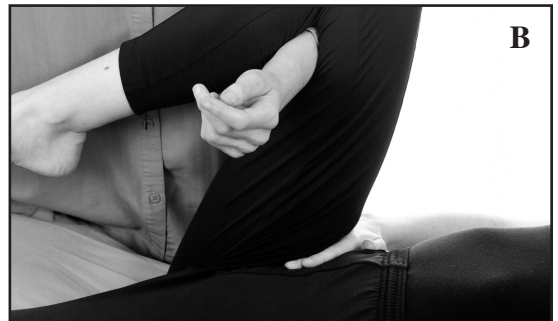
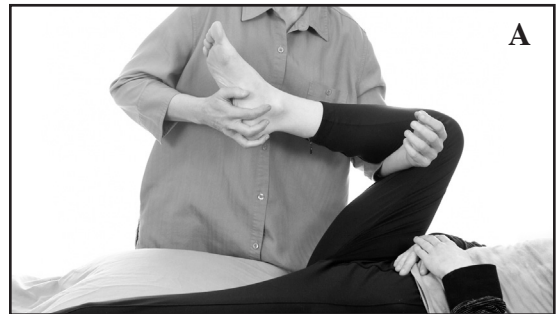
A) Lift the leg upwards at the knee, creating space between the pelvis and femur before flexing at the hip.

or

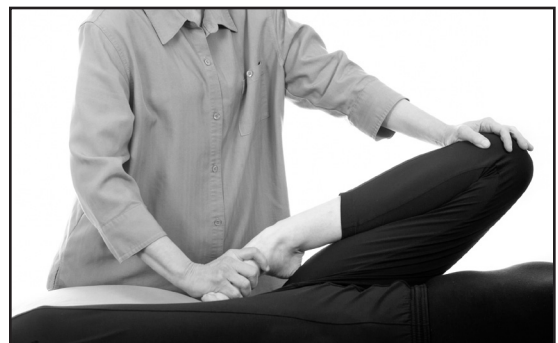
B) Lift the leg as described above, and have the client place a flat hand palm down on the lower belly, creating space between the pelvis and femur before flexing at the hip.

or

C) Lift the leg as described above, and train the client to use his or her index finger or thumb to pull the tendons laterally during just the first stretch. The tendons will usually stay out of the way when you repeat the stretch.



57. SWITCHBLADE: With one hand on top of the toes and the other on the bent knee, push the knee towards the chest and the toes toward the groin three times, stretching the low back and the anterior compartment muscles of the shin.



58. ADDUCTOR ROLL: Bring the knee to the chest. Roll the hip away from you and place your north knee on the sacrum.



Bring the bent knee confidently toward you in an arc, allowing your knee to slip naturally off the sacrum into the soft tissue. Move the leg in circles at least three times, stretching the adductors and doing compressions on the glutes.



59. KNEE/HIP PULL: To create space in the hip and knee, stretching the muscles that cross those joints, reach under the knee with your north forearm. Set the foot down on the table, stabilize it with your hand, and pull the knee southwards three times.



60. FLAMINGO: To stretch the adductors, externally rotate the bent leg and bring the sole of the foot as close to the groin as possible. Facing the client's head, stabilize the straight leg with your inside hand, and use your other hand (or forearm) to press the knee toward the table three times. If your client does not feel a stretch, feel free to have the client move toward you and drop the bent knee off the edge of the massage table.



61. FORWARD LUNGE: To further stretch the adductors, place the sole of the client's foot on your opposite waist, allowing the leg to fall laterally as much as is comfortable. Stabilize the straight leg with your inside hand. Support the bent knee with your other hand and gently lunge forward three times. Be sure to get feedback on this one.



62. MAKE A BANANA: For a more intense stretch of the iliotibial band, drop the knee toward the midline of the body. Use both hands to form the IT band into a banana shape, twisting one hand one way and the other hand the other way. Rather than being directly on top of the IT band, your thumbs are sinking into the lateral hamstrings, and your fingers are gripping the quads. Move up and down the leg.



63. SKOOCHIE WALK: Place your client's foot on the table with the knee bent and move it as close to the butt as possible. Have a seat on the table and place your inside shin across the client's foot to secure it in place. Targeting only the Rectus femoris, place your fingertips on either side of the muscle and hook and pull one way, then the other, alternating hands. Work your way slowly down to the crease of the hip and back again, moving the tissue as far to one side and then the other as you can without moving across the skin.



64. LEMON SQUEEZE: For a passive stretch for Rectus femoris, interlace your fingers and with the heels of your hands squeeze and lift the muscle, moving from the knee to the groin and back.



65. KNEE BOOGIE: With the heels of your hands on either side of the knee joint, move vigorously as if rolling clay into a ball.



66. CROW BAR: This move uses the femur to lift the pelvis into a posterior tilt in order to stretch the low back. Checking to make sure the client's foot is quite close to the hip, place your interlaced hands just north of the knee and rock your own body southwards until the client's hip rises slightly off the table. The client's foot can be flat on the table, or squarely on top of the bolster. I prefer using the bolster so that the client gets a bonus calf stretch in the process. Release slowly and reposition your hands northwards and repeat, in a very slow rhythm, moving to the crease of the hip and back.



67. POSTERIOR THIGH POINTS: To passively stretch the hamstrings, place your thumbs one atop the other starting behind the knee. Thumb walk firmly down the middle of the hamstrings to the ischial tuberosity and back up, spreading the muscle fibers. Repeat.



68. SKOOCHIE WALK THE CALF: To stretch the calf, including Gastrocnemius and Soleus, form the letter M with your fingertips. Place your hands behind the knee in the center of the calf between the two heads of Gastrocnemius. Hook and pull way to one side, then as far as possible to the other side, one hand at a time, moving as much muscle to one side of the bones as possible without moving across the skin. In this way, move down to the ankle and back up to the top.



69. CALF HOOK AND PULL: Put your outside hand on top of the knee to stabilize it. Use the other hand to hook and pull the whole calf medially, down and back again.

Switch hands and repeat, this time hooking and pulling the whole calf laterally, down and back again.



70. LEMON SQUEEZE: Interlace your fingers and squeeze the calf with the heels of your hands, as if to lift the muscle off the bone and push it away from you. In this way, move down to the ankle and back. This move stretches the muscles of the calf, including Gastrocnemius and Soleus.



71. ONE HIP LIFT: Stand next to the table. To stretch the low back and mobilize the pelvis, cradle the leg with your north arm, grasping the foot with your hand. With your other hand, hook the ischial tuberosity and rock your body northwards three times, bringing the leg toward the chest, lifting the pelvis as you go.



72. KNEE PUSH: To mobilize the sacroiliac joint, thereby stretching the muscles that attach to the sacrum, reach under the knee with your south hand, clasp hands over the knee, secure the leg at an 80-degree angle and press straight down into the table three times.

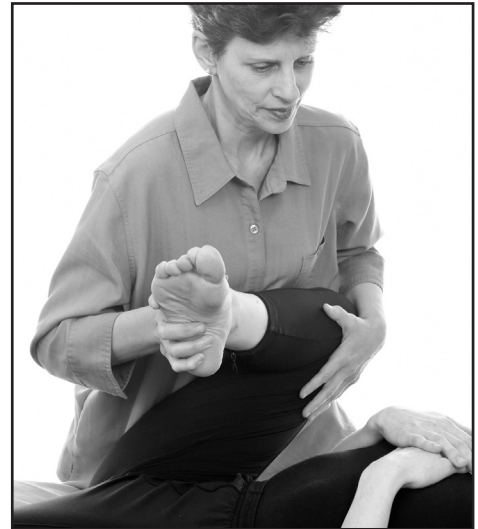


73. CAN CAN: To stretch the hamstrings, bend the knee and push it toward the mid chest. With your inside hand, cup the heel. With your other hand lightly on the lateral hamstrings, extend the leg at the knee joint. So, this is a two-part move; push the bent leg toward the mid chest, then extend, for a total of three times. Get feedback.



74. TOES TO NOSE: To stretch the external rotators of the hip, including the Piriformis and Gluteus maximus, bring the knee to the chest. Maintaining flexion at the hip is crucial to your goal. Place the toes in line with the nose. Now, with your south hand holding the outside ankle and your north hand hugging the knee toward your body, push the toes toward the nose as you pull the knee toward you three times.

REPEAT ALL LEG MOVES ON THE OTHER SIDE.



75. DOUBLE JACKKNIFE: To stretch the low back and shin muscles, bring both knees to the chest. Ask your client to help you, if necessary, so you do not strain your back. Cross the feet at the first joint of the big toe. With your north forearm across the legs and your other hand over the toes, push both knees toward the chest as you push the feet toward the butt three times.



76. SPINAL TWIST: To stretch the paraspinal muscles, bend the far leg and place the foot over the straight leg toward you. Move the straight leg slightly away from you. With your south hand grasp the hip, and stabilize the shoulder farthest from you with the other hand. While bending your knees, as if you are sitting down, roll the hip toward you three times. For a more intense stretch, feel free to drop the foot of the bent leg over your side of the table. **If you hear or feel the back adjust, stop right there.**

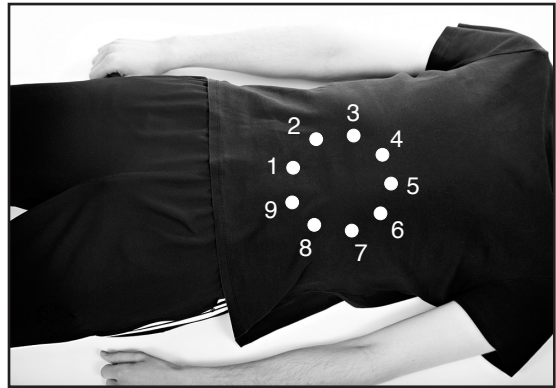
REPEAT ON THE OTHER SIDE.



77. BELLY PUSH PULL: Start by rubbing the belly very lightly to warm the area and introduce touch. Then, place one hand on top of the other and lay them lightly with your fingers pointed toward the ribs. Take a relaxed, big breath together.



Now, you will address nine points in a circle with the navel at the center.



Place the heel of your hand lightly on point one. Ask your client to inhale. As he or she exhales, push with the heel of your hand away from you, always keeping the belly button in the hollow of the palm of your hand, then hook the tissue with your fingertips and pull back towards you.

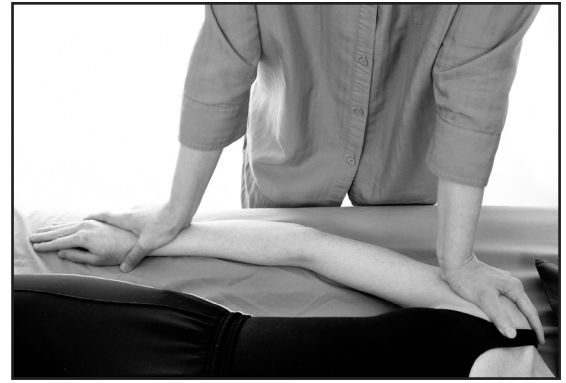


Re-place your hand lightly on point two as the client inhales, and repeat the push-pull on the exhalation. Push and pull in this manner around all nine points, changing your position, switching hands an/or reversing the move to enable you to continue all the way around the belly.



End with a light hold, back where you started. Close with light circles.

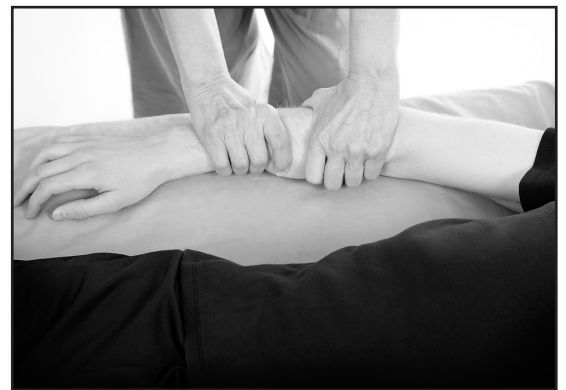
78. WRIST TO SHOULDER: Place the arm palm down at the client's side. Place your north hand on the outside of the shoulder (not on top) and the other hand on the wrist. Lean into the arm, pushing your hands away from each other to stretch the arm three times.



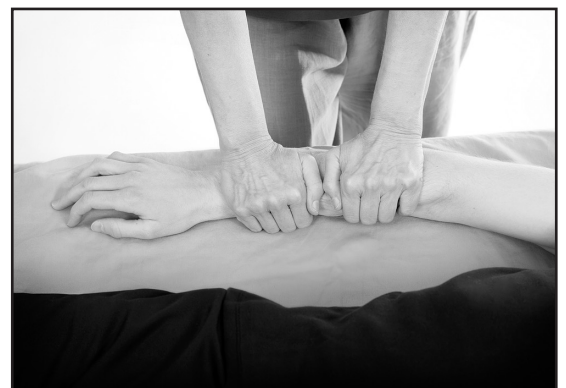
79. EXTENSORS: Cross your wrists, grasp the upper and lower end of the forearm (without crossing the wrist or elbow joint). Without sliding over the skin, push your hands apart to stretch the extensor muscles of the wrist and hand three times.



80. WRING THE EXTENSORS: Grasp the forearm with your hands side by side. Wring one hand one way, and the other hand the other way, leaving an inch or so between your hands. Move up and down the arm.



81. EXTENSOR PUSHAWAY: With the heels of your hands side by side or one atop the other, push the extensors toward your client's body as if you are kneading bread.

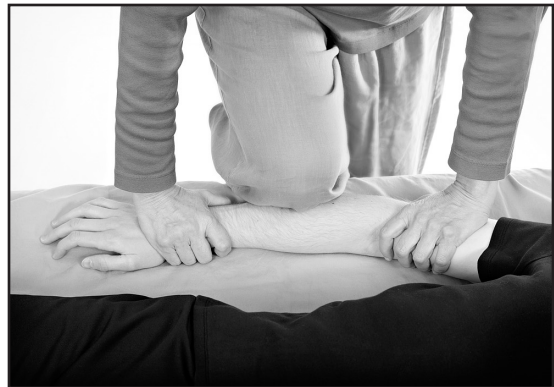


82. ELBOWS UP: Use your elbows to take a walk up the flexors. Take a big step with one elbow, then a small step with the other to fill in.



Experiment with “wringing” the tissue by placing your elbows side by side and pushing one away from you as you draw the other one toward you.

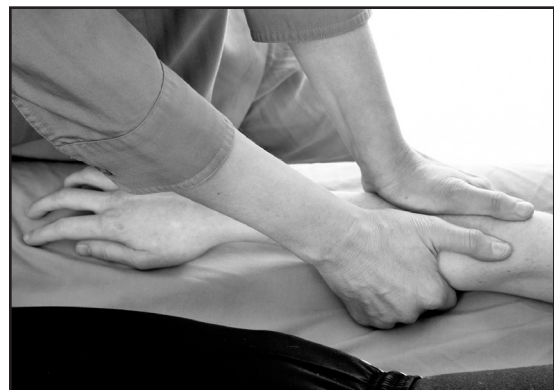
83. KNEE UP: Use your knee to compress points up and down the extensors. Experiment with using your patellar tendon and/or the southern border of the patella. Get plenty of feedback.



84. WRIST: Facing southward, grasp the forearm with your inside hand. With your other hand, press down firmly on client’s hand (it may help to interlace your fingers with the client’s) and pull the forearm towards you as you push the hand away, stretching the wrist three times.



85. FOREARM PEDALING: To mobilize the ulna and radius, stand facing the client’s head and grasp both sides of the forearm just south of the elbow so that you have an arm bone in each hand. Without moving over the skin, park your hands, relax your thumbs, and use your grip strength to move the bones as if you are riding a bicycle with your hands on the pedals. Re-position your hands any number of times, moving toward the wrist, and repeat.



86. FLEXORS: To stretch the flexors of the hand and wrist, lightly hold the client's wrist with your inside hand. Place your other hand so that your fingers wrap around the forearm just south of the elbow. Now, supinate the wrist as you grasp the flexors with your fingertips and pull laterally, as if you were wringing out a wet washcloth. In this way, grasping and pulling, move toward the wrist and repeat as many times as you like.



87. EXTENSORS: To stretch the extensors of the hand and wrist, lightly hold the client's wrist with your inside hand. Place your other hand so that your thumb is just to the outside of the radius. Using the flat pad of your thumb, push medially as you supinate the wrist. Push points all the way to the wrist, experimenting with the best locations for the pressure. Remember, you are pushing the extensors across the bones and not straight down into the tissue.



88. DELTOIDS: With your inside hand, bring the bent arm across the chest and hold the elbow. With your other hand, cup the shoulder, firmly grasping the medial Deltoids with your fingertips. Now, push the elbow across the chest as you pull the shoulder toward you in a rocking motion, stretching the lateral and posterior fibers of Deltoids, three times.



89. INTERNAL ROTATORS: Stand facing your client's head. Abduct the arm to shoulder height. In order to stretch the internal rotators, you need to externally rotate the arm. Bend the arm into a right angle, making sure the elbow is slightly off the table. Stabilizing the shoulder lightly with your inside hand, use your other hand to lightly grasp the wrist and externally rotate the arm until your client cues you to stop. To affect lasting change, repeat for a total of eight to ten times.



90. EXTERNAL ROTATORS: Stand facing your client’s head. Abduct the arm to shoulder height. In order to stretch the external rotators, we need to internally rotate the arm. Bend the arm into a right angle, making sure the elbow is slightly off the table. Stabilizing the shoulder very firmly with your inside hand, use your other hand to lightly grasp the wrist and internally rotate the arm until your client cues you to stop. To affect lasting change, repeat for a total of eight to ten times.



You may combine the two stretches, alternating between external and internal rotation, as if you are operating a slot machine.

91. HATBOX: With the arm tilted toward the midline of the body, grasp the elbow and the medial edge of the scapula and pull straight towards you, as if you were pulling a box off the shelf while keeping the contents upright. Work your way up and down the medial border of the scapula. You are stretching Rhomboids, Trapezius, Serratus anterior, and Levator scapula.

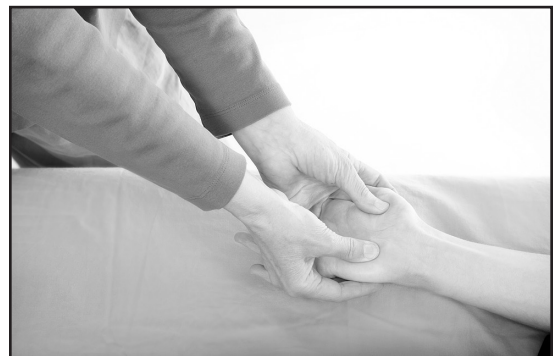


92. HAND FOLD OVER: Pick up the hand, palm down, and knead to relax it a bit. Now, fold the hand over your fingertips as if you are breaking apart a frozen ice pop that has two sticks, stretching the intrinsic muscles of the hand.



Folding over works the opposite way as well—fold upwards, opening the palm.

93. THUMB WALK PALMS: Turn the client’s hand palm up and interlace your fingers as shown. Take a slow walk around the palm with the flat pads of your thumbs.



94. CARPAL TUNNEL RELEASE: This move is intended to create space in the wrist at the site of the carpal tunnel by releasing the fascia, taking pressure off of the median nerve.

With the client's hand palm down, grasp the sides with both hands. Now, with your fingertips, find the small bony prominences of the Scaphoid tubercle and the Pisiform bones. Very gently separate these carpal bones by pulling them apart with your fingertips, holding perfectly still for at least three minutes. The movement is subtle and very light, as if you are opening the hand, exposing the palm. It is the opposite motion to hand fold over (on previous page). As the fascia releases your client may feel increased warmth, a tingling sensation, or a feeling of movement. **If he or she experiences any discomfort whatsoever, discontinue this move.** As with all fascial release work, you may feel increased warmth as well as a softening of the tissue and a feeling that your fingertips are moving farther apart by themselves.



95. FANNING THE CARDS: To stretch the wrist and finger flexors, face the hand and take your time spreading the palm as if you are fanning out a hand of cards you have just been dealt. Do not allow the wrist to bend back very far.



96. THAI DANCER: This move is named for the position that mimics that of the hands of traditional Thai dancers whose fingers curl back gracefully. Go to the center of the palm. From there, stretching the flexors of the fingers, slide out the thumb and pinky finger, spreading them apart and back, but keeping the client's wrist from bending back very far. Repeat, this time with the index and ring finger, and lastly with the middle finger. Repeat as many times you like.

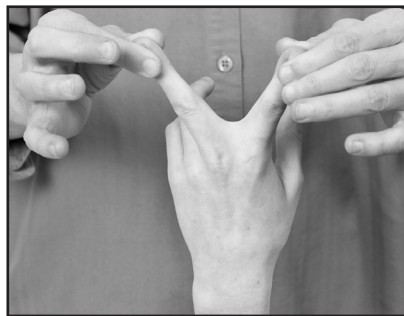


97. WRIST: With your inside hand, grasp the client's forearm. With your other hand, interlace your fingers, palm to palm and lift your elbow. While exerting a slight stretch, rotate the hand at the wrist five times in each direction. Now place your fingertips on the client's knuckles, lock them in place, and, still lifting your elbow, push the client's forearm toward the table as you lift the hand toward the ceiling three times to stretch the wrist. Keep the client's hand aligned with the wrist.

Maintaining a stretch, slowly twist the fingers one way and then the other as you are pulling your fingers out.



98. FINGER YOGA: Grasp the thumb and first finger, giving them a little traction while doing so. Spread them apart forward and then back as if you are walking them. Spread them apart sideways, then cross them one way, and then the other. Repeat with fingers one and two, then two and three, then three and four, then four and five: Walk, walk, spread, cross and cross. Maintain a slight stretch throughout, keeping the wrist aligned with the hand.



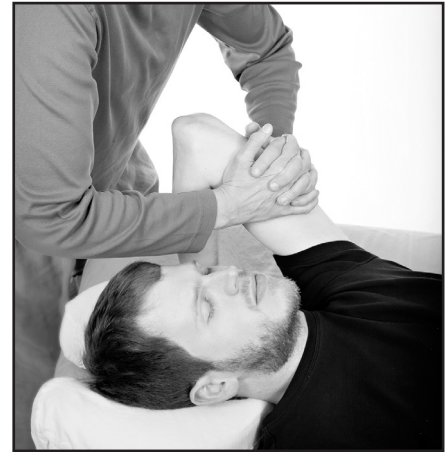
99. SNAPPING THE FINGERS: With the second segments of your first two fingers, one on the top and one on the bottom, grasp the thumb just past the first joint. Pull gently but firmly. Release the pressure, go to the tip of the thumb and snap off, pulling up quickly. With the fingers do the same, but pull twice, just past the knuckle and then past the first joint. Release the pressure, go to the very tip and snap off.



100. TRICEPS: Place the client's hand palm down beside his or her head and under the shoulder so the fingers are pointing southward. Place your south hand on the client's thigh and your other hand on the elbow. Push the client's elbow down toward the table three times. **Stop if the client experiences wrist discomfort.** Moving your south hand to Triceps, knead and squeeze.



Stand at the head of the table and do lemon squeezes down and up the triceps. Gently shake out the arm.

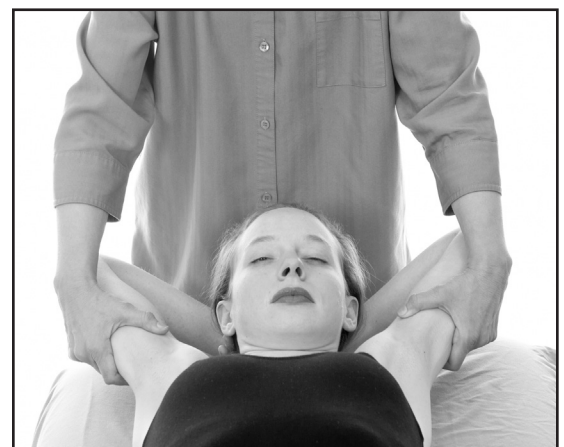


101. ELBOW-TO-ELBOW: To stretch Latissimus dorsi, Internal and External obliques, Serratus anterior, Triceps, and more, bring the arm above the head. Hook your outside arm elbow-to-elbow with the client. With your inside hand, gently stabilize the forearm and lean straight back (not down toward the floor) three times.



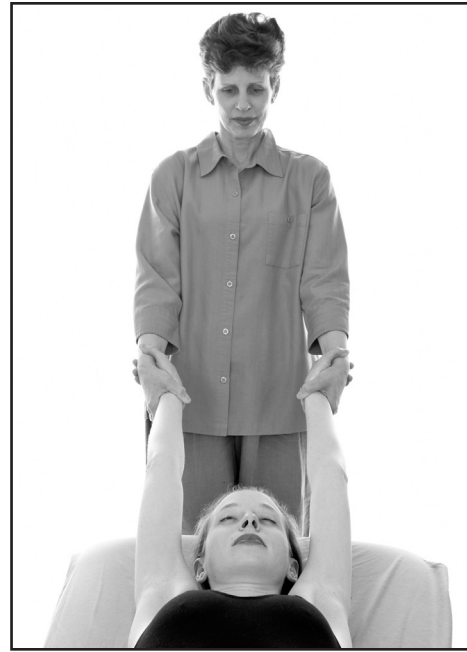
REPEAT ALL ARM MOVES ON THE OTHER SIDE.

102. COAT HANGER: To further stretch Latissimus dorsi, Obliques, Serratus anterior, Triceps, and more, ask the client to clasp his or her hands behind the head. Reach over the arms and grasp the armpits so that you can feel the scapulae. Pull straight back. Then, move to the middle of the upper arms and pull again. Then move back to where you started and pull one last time.

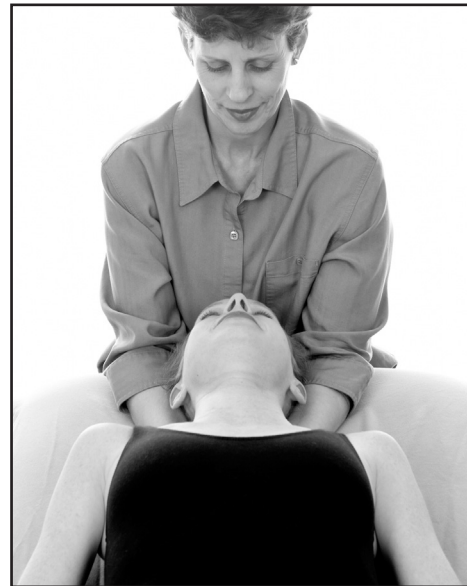


103. WATER SKI: Grasp the client's wrists and have the client grasp your wrists to form a solid connection. Lean back, allowing the client's weight to be a counter balance for you, and pull both arms simultaneously two times, enjoying a slow and thorough stretch of the arms, shoulders and torso. Now, pull one side and then the other, as if you are steering. If the client is awake and willing, remove the bolster and intensify the stretch by having the client push his or her heel southwards on the same side you are pulling. End with one more stretch, pulling both arms simultaneously.

An alternative to grasping the wrists that is more comfortable for some clients, is to grasp one another's thumbs as shown here. →



104. THREE-FINGER PUSHUPS: Ask your client to lift his or her head slightly, so you can slide your hands underneath with your fingers ending up next to the south end of the scapulae. Ask the client to relax. Using your first three fingers, push up into the soft tissue on either side of the spine, watching the chest gently lift as you do so. Push, release, and move toward the head. Continue push-ups all the way to the hairline. Then, move out, still doing push-ups, to the ears and back, working along the soft tissue right where the skull drops off into the muscles of the neck.



105. MAKE AN "X": Lifting the head slightly to enable you to get under it, place your right hand on the left shoulder and your left hand on the right shoulder, allowing your crossed forearms to support the head. Stand up. Pushing down on the shoulders, bring the client's chin toward the chest three times to stretch the paracervical muscles, lifting with your legs.



106. MAKE HALF AN “X”: To stretch the extensors and rotators of the neck, put one hand on the shoulder behind the head and use the other hand to cradle the head. Stand up. Using the forearm to support your wrist, angle the head towards the shoulder and lift three times, saltwater taffy. Switch to the other side and repeat.



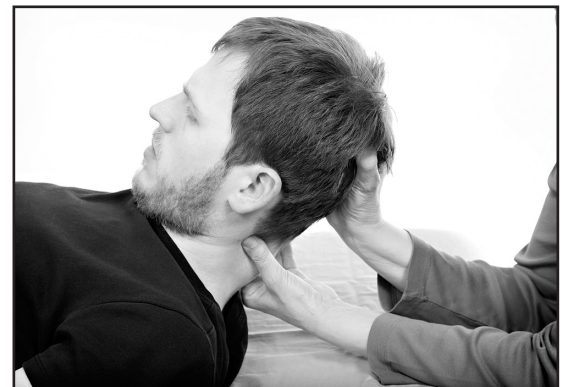
107. GO BOWLING: Have a seat. Support the head with the left hand. Place the right forearm under the neck, thumb up, keeping your forearm very close to the base of the neck. With the left hand, rotate the head to the right toward the crook of your elbow.

Elevate the elbow dramatically, keeping your fingers on the table. Guiding with the left hand, allow the head to roll down the forearm (the radius). With your left hand, move the head back to where you started and repeat as many times as you wish.

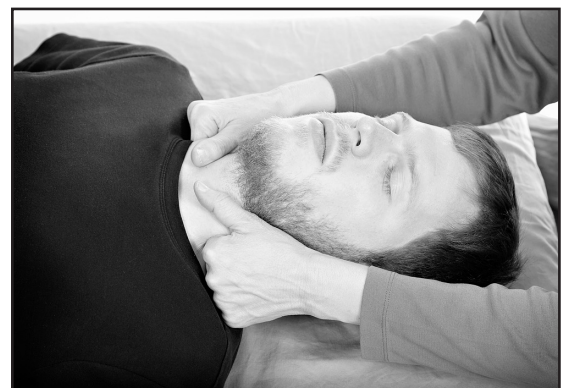
Repeat on the other side.



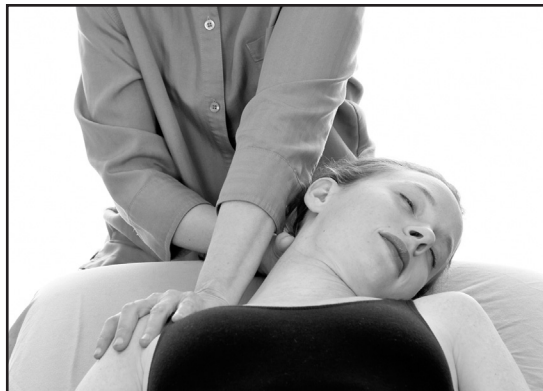
108. CLOTHESPIN: Push the head towards the chest with one hand. Park your elbow on the table if possible. With the other hand (palm up) supported by the edge of the table, pinch broadly up and down the neck, Saltwater Taffy, stretching the neck extensors.



109. SCM PICKUP: To give a passive stretch to the flexors of the neck, grasp the bellies of the Sternocleidomastoid muscles and rhythmically lift, working your way down and back again. You are gently pushing the muscles toward the thumbs, avoiding a hard pinch.

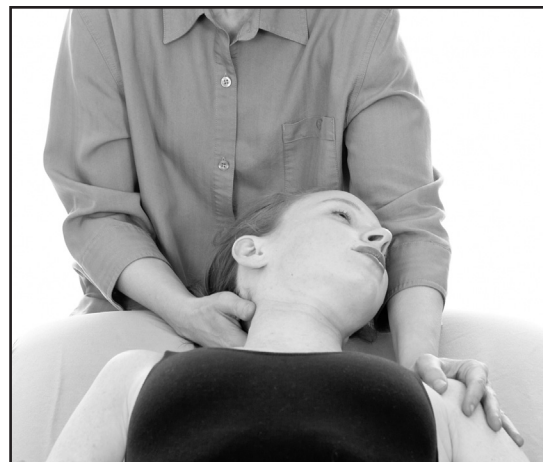


110. CROSSED-WRIST SHOULDER PUSH: Targeting Upper trapezius and Levator scapula, cradle the back of the head with your right hand and turn it to the left. With your left hand, reach across so that your wrists cross and place it on the right shoulder. Now, slowly and gently pull the head toward you as you push the shoulder away three times.



Leave your right hand and your client's head right where they are, in preparation for the next move.

111. PIN AND STRETCH: Bring your left hand to the left shoulder. With the fingers of your right hand, find the mastoid process of the temporal bone, the bony prominence just behind the left ear. Exert pressure, pinning the attachments of Levator scapula as you use your left hand to push the left shoulder southwards three times.



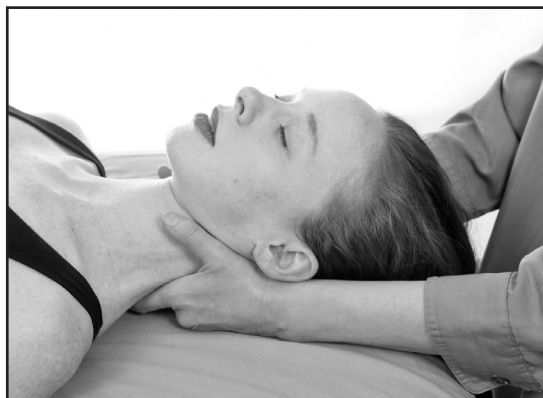
REPEAT MOVES #110 and #111 ON THE OTHER SIDE.

112. CRADLE PULL: The intent of this stretch is to lengthen the entire spine, stretching the Erector spinae group as well as creating space between the vertebrae. Some clients will feel this stretch just down to the base of the neck and some will feel it all the way into the low back. If you and your client are chatting at this point, please request silence for this stretch to ensure that the neck stays relaxed throughout.



Also vital to the success of this stretch is a nice, **slow** pace going into it and coming out of it.

Slide your hands so that your fingertips are under the base of the neck, one hand cradling the other, and the client's skull sits at the base of your thumbs. Move your forearms closer together until they support the sides of the head. Allow the table to support your hands. With a solid grip, slowly pull toward you as far as the client will allow, getting verbal feedback, and hold for as long as is comfortable for you. Take up the slack as it is given to you. Hold for as long as you can. Sometimes it feels as if the neck will keep lengthening forever. When you are finished, **release very slowly**.



113. OPENING THE DRAWER: Targeting the suboccipital neck extensor muscles, place your hands so that they are touching each other as shown. Use your fingertips to find the space right where the skull drops off into neck tissue. Supporting the head with your hands, point your fingertips straight up toward the ceiling as if you are getting into position to open a drawer that has lost its pulls. You should see the client's chin rise slightly. Hold for as long as you can.



When you are comfortable with moving on, gently pull the head toward you as if you are opening the drawer. Hold for as long as you can.

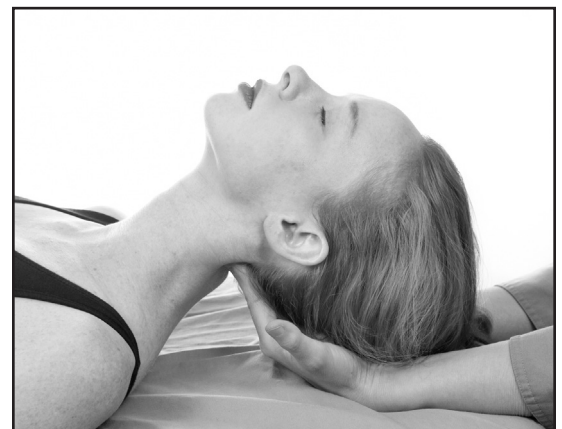


114. FLOATING HEAD: This move, targeting the suboccipital muscles, requires strong fingers, patience, and a client who can tolerate deep work. Get lots of feedback when you are practicing this. Place your hands so that they are touching each other. Ask your client to keep his or her head and neck completely relaxed. Now, straighten out your fingers all the way with your first knuckles off the table so that the head is suspended in mid-air, supported only by your fingertips, which are pointed towards the ceiling. Hold perfectly still and wait, and wait some more if necessary, and the head will gradually drop into the palms of your hands. Do not rush this move. If your fingers feel as if they are going to fall off, try silently talking to the head and neck, giving them permission to let go. Of course, if the head is still suspended, come gently out of the move before you hurt yourself.



Once the head drops all the way, pull it gently towards you and hold for as long as you can.

By the time the process is complete, the client often experiences an almost spiritual release of tension.



115. TOWEL PULL: Place a towel or pillowcase, folded lengthwise, under the client's neck and grasp the ends using an overhand grip. Pull toward you, keeping the sides close to the client's face for stability. Ask the client to tell you when to stop pulling. Hold at least 30 seconds. Release very slowly.



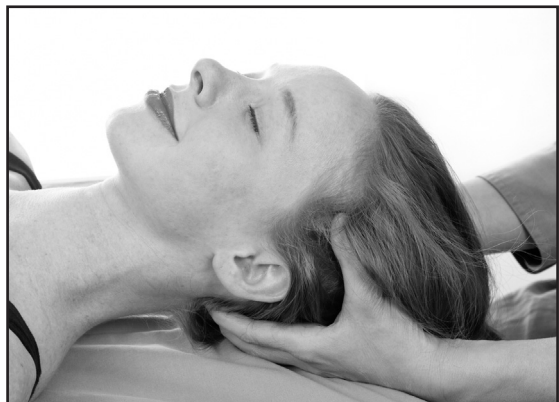
Change to an underhand grip and **slowly** roll the head as far as is comfortable for the client, all the way to one side, hold saltwater taffy, and then to the other for as long as you like.



116. SHAMPOO: Make slow circles with your fingertips and thumbs all over the scalp, hands working simultaneously. There is no such thing as too much scalp work, so take your sweet time.

Make tiny circles around the backs of the ears, moving the soft tissue over the bone without any friction on the skin.

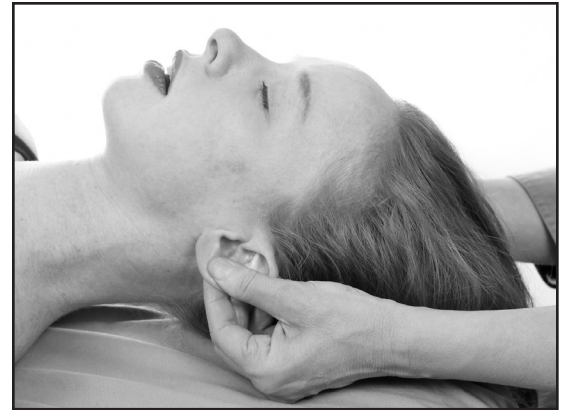
Both of these moves give a pleasant passive stretch to Occipitofrontalis.



117. HAIR PULL: Every hair on our body has a corresponding muscle which, when activated, makes our hair stand on end, or gives us goose bumps. These muscles are known as Erector pili. Hair pulling stretches these tiny muscles. Hair pulling is not to everyone's liking, so after you have received permission, gently and gradually pull a handful of hair straight toward you. Then pull the same handful east, west, north, and south. Then pull and twist one way, and then the other. Continue around the rest of the scalp. No matter which way you move the hair, you are also passively stretching Occipitofrontalis.



118. EARS: Gently pull the ears away from the head. Now, rub them as if you are unfolding the petals of a rose.



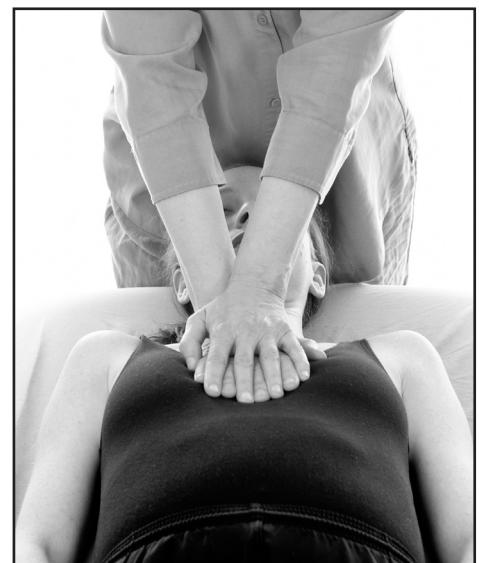
119. VULCAN GREETING (LIVE LONG AND PROSPER): To stretch the many muscles of the face and temples, spread your fingers apart in twos. Place the client's ears in the space created, making full hand contact with the heels of your hands on the temples. Using the strength of your arms and chest, make slow, firm circles, hands working simultaneously with uniform pressure like the wheels of a slow locomotive, moving the soft tissue over the underlying bony structure, with no movement across the skin. Continue for as long as you like.



120. MOOSH FACE: Essentially the same move as above, only with all four fingers in front of the ears. Using the strength of your arms and chest, make slow, firm circles, hands working simultaneously with uniform pressure, moving the soft tissue over the underlying bony structure, with no movement across the skin. Continue for as long as you like.



121. RIB RELEASE: Before doing this move, be sure to explain the entire process to the client, getting permission before proceeding. To mobilize the ribs, place one hand on the sternum and place the other hand on top. Ask your client to take a breath. Keep your pressure very light as the client completes two or more breath cycles, allowing him or her to become accustomed to your hands. Then, ask the client to take a very deep breath and to exhale completely, until the lungs feel empty. With the exhalation, push down into the chest, surfing the breath, with considerable pressure. Ask your client to inhale whenever ready. Toward the very end of the inhalation, abruptly remove your hands and ask the client to complete the inhalation as fully as possible.



SEATED POSITION

The following moves are done with the client sitting upright.

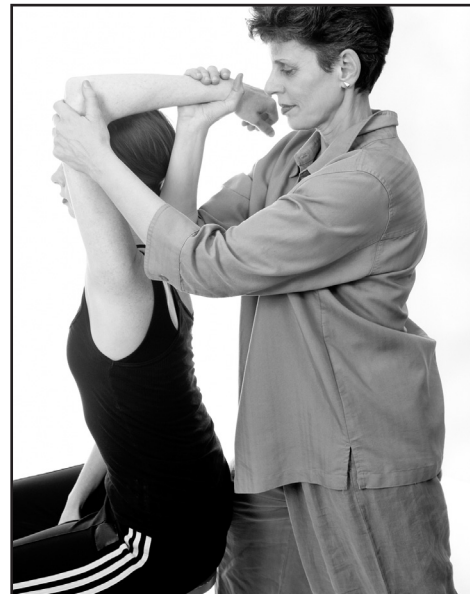
122. SCAPULA ROCK: Reach under the client's arm and support the shoulder, allowing the arm to dangle scarecrow style. Place your outside hand in front of the shoulder. Pull the shoulder toward you in a rocking motion, allowing you to roll the scapula over the thumb or fingers of your inside hand (palm down), just as far as you can get. Start at the north edge of the scapula, move south, then back north as many times as you like. This move stretches Trapezius, Rhomboids, and more.



123. KITTEN SQUEEZE: To target Trapezius and Levator scapula, use both hands pick up the shoulder like a mother cat picks up her kitten by the nape of the neck. Hold perfectly still for at least 30 seconds, and take your time releasing. Sometimes you can feel the tension let go, just like when the kitten goes limp.



124. TENNIS SERVE: With your inside hand, grasp the client's wrist. Very carefully plant your inside elbow in the upper Trapezius area between the scapula and the spine. Ask your client to relax the arm and shoulder (he or she will often want to hold them up for you). With your other hand supporting the client's elbow, rock your inside elbow into various points in the soft tissue by pulling the wrist toward you, careful to keep the client's elbow close to his or her head. Use your other hand to pull the elbow toward you to intensify the work. Get feedback, since the pressure may be more than you think. As you rock, pull the arm into a full Triceps stretch. Rock one time per point, then re-place your elbow and rock again, doing a rock walk all around the space between the bones. With each point, say "Saltwater Taffy."

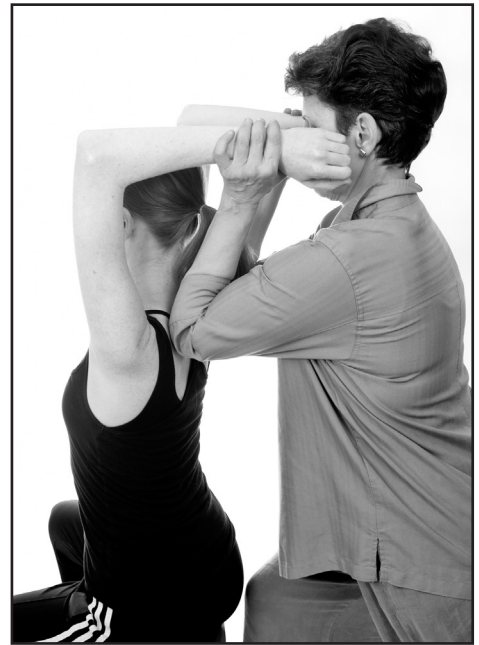


125. HAIRPIN HOOK AND PULL: To stretch Triceps, place the client's hand behind the neck and support the elbow with your inside hand. As you rock the arm toward you, use your outside hand to hook and pull Triceps laterally. When you are finished, gently knead Triceps.

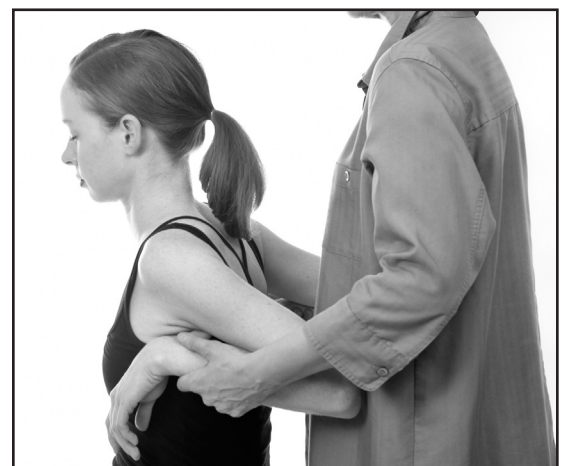


REPEAT FROM #122 ON THE OTHER ARM.

126. DOUBLE TENNIS SERVE: Grasp both the wrists and lift the arms up and behind the client. Remind the client to relax the arms and shoulders ("Drop your elbows" works well). Carefully place your elbows in the soft tissue between the spine and the scapulae and pull back into a full Triceps stretch while simultaneously doing a rocking walk, pressing into various points with your elbow.



127. CHICKEN WINGS: To stretch the anterior Deltoids, grasp the wrists and pull the bent arms straight up three times.



128. TWIST: Place the client's left arm behind the head. Reach around the front of the upper arm and grasp the forearm. With your right hand lightly pushing the client's right scapula, twist three times, Saltwater Taffy, to stretch the paraspinal muscles. Repeat on the other side.



129. HALF A HUG: Place the client's hand on the opposite shoulder. Pushing the scapula with one hand, pull the elbow with the other to stretch posterior Deltoids and the upper back. You are not rotating the client at the waist.



130. SIDE BEND TWIST: Place client's right hand behind the head. With your right hand, push the bent elbow away from you as you pull the client's other arm toward you. Repeat on the other side.



131. IRONING THE NECK: This stretch targets Levator scapula, upper Trapezius, and the paracervical muscles. Ask the client to sit tall. Gently position the head to one side. Before you start this move, identify the bony prominence at the top of the shoulder, the acromian process of the scapula. This is your ending point.

Park your inside forearm just below the ear to stabilize the head. Bring your outside forearm right next to your other arm to form the "iron". Roll the "iron" down the client's neck with your outside forearm palm down, palm up,

(continued, next page)



palm down, palm up, just until you reach the acromian process. Give a good stretch as you roll. Angle the “iron” slightly back to avoid pressure on the clavicle.

Bring your outside forearm back to the starting point and repeat two more times. Then, do the same on the other side of the neck.

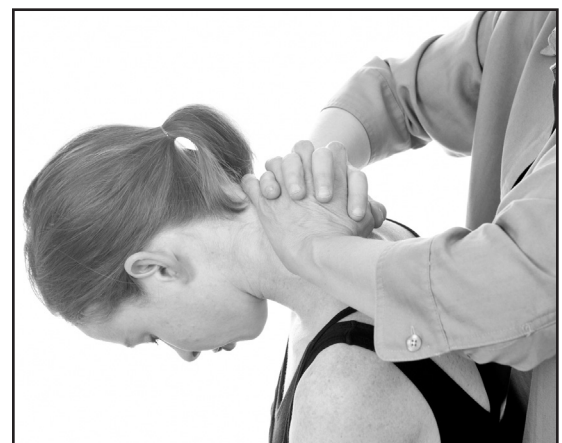
132. DOUBLE IRON: Set the head upright and iron both sides simultaneously in one direction only, starting from just below the ear and moving out towards the acromian process as shown, repeating two more times.



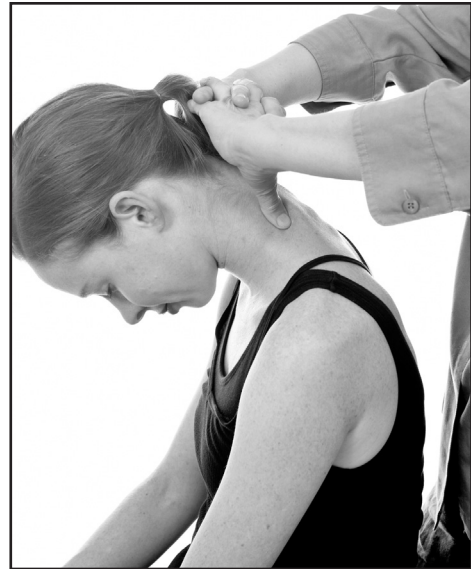
133. KNEAD THE GLUTTON MUSCLES: The term “glutton muscles” includes Trapezii, Levator scapulae, the upper portion of the Erector spinae group, and Rhomboids. The muscles in this area simply can’t get too much attention. Squeeze, knead, use thumb circles and whatever else you like to relax this area. This move is appropriate at any point during your seated routine. Throw it in whenever possible.



134. LEMON SQUEEZE: Ask the client to drop his or her chin to the chest. Interlace your fingers and squeeze with your palms, starting at the base of the neck and working up to the hairline and back, giving an excellent stretch to the paracervical muscles. Repeat as much as you like.



135. SALAD TONGS: Keep your fingers interlaced, open your hands, and with the flat pads of your thumbs, squeeze in a tong-like motion starting at the base of the neck, moving along the paracervical muscles to the hairline and back. Repeat as much as you like. Close with lemon squeezes.



136. FOREHEAD CRADLE: Support the forehead by asking the client to drop his or her head into your hand. With your other hand, make tiny circles with your fingers and thumb from below the ears medially to the base of the neck, then down both sides of the cervical spine and back up. If you have time, repeat on the other side of the body. If circles are a challenge, a broad pinching motion works well. By switching sides (and hands) you can prolong this move.



137. HEAD LIFT: To stretch the neck, ask the client to sit up tall. Support the forehead with one hand. With the heel of other hand, support the occiput. Take a breath together and lift the head straight up toward the ceiling. Hold just a few long moments and release very slowly.



138. PRAYER LIFT: Ask the client to hold a prayer position in front of the chest. Grasp the wrists and lift straight up for an arm and upper back stretch. If possible, use your knees to push into the back a bit and lean back to enhance the stretch. Repeat two more times.



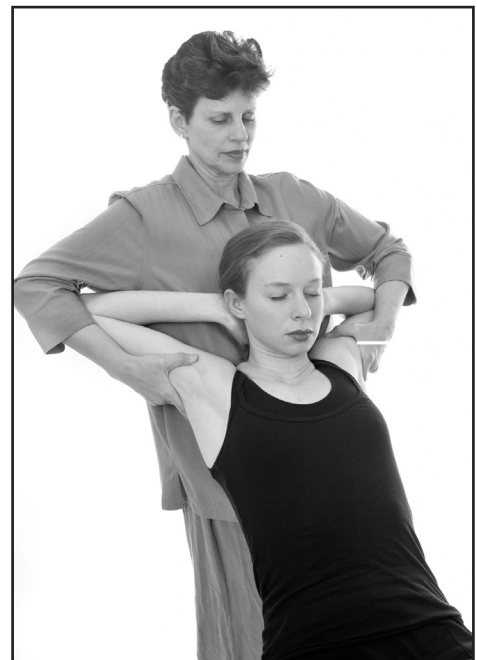
139. BENDING THE COAT HANGER: Ask the client to clasp his or her hands behind the head and keep them clasped. Separate the clasped hands from the head. With your hand's palm against the client's clasped palms, pull the client's arms toward you as you push the head away, with your other hand, stretching the neck and chest. Repeat two more times.



140. THREE-WAY LIFT-OFF: Ask the client to continue to clasp his or her hands behind the head. Get yourself into your power stance, with one foot forward and the other back, both knees bent. Ask the client to lean back until you are supporting the full weight of the upper body with your forward thigh.

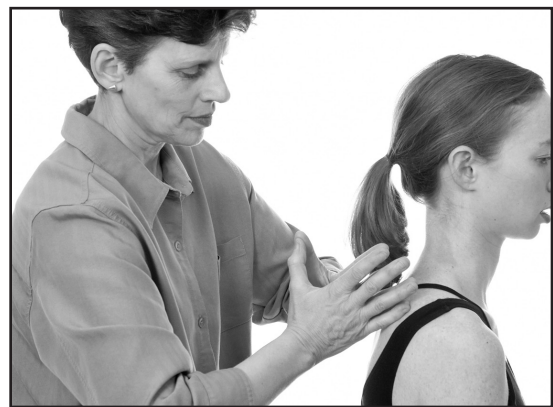
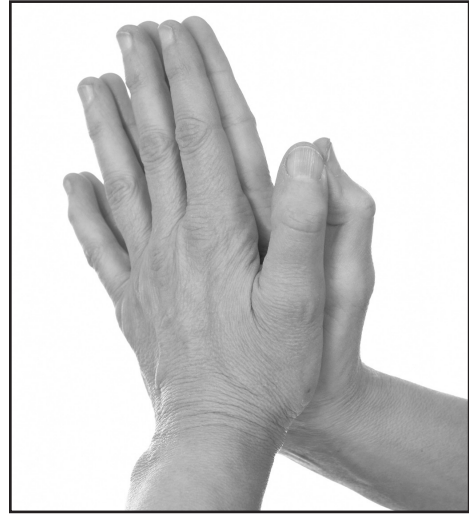
Reach in front of the arms and grasp the rib cage so that you can feel the lateral edges of the scapulae. The three ways are: push your hip forward into the mid back to open up the rib cage, pull the arms back gently to stretch the chest, and lean back as far as you can to lift the upper body toward you, stretching the abdominal wall.

Now, move your grip to the upper arms and repeat, then move your grip back where you started and repeat.



141. CHOP AND SWEEP: Pressing your straight fingers together in a prayer position, with palms slightly apart to create more tension in the fingers, chop the upper and middle back and lightly over the shoulder blades, carefully avoiding the spine.

Sweep the head, neck, and back with light fingertips. Close.



End of 'Passive Stretches'

Stretching Yourself

*Wear stretchy clothing and make sure you have a cushy mat. Remember our motto: **If it hurts, don't do it.** Or, modify it to your satisfaction, or cut back on the repetitions. The number of repetitions in the text is based on my personal preferences and is only a suggestion. If you prefer to hold a stretch rather than use the Saltwater Taffy method, please do so, as long as you maintain it for a minimum of 30 seconds.*

SUPINE

LOW BACK: Bring both knees to your chest, using your muscles to do so. Then, pull just a little farther with your arms. Hold, say “Saltwater Taffy” and release, just a few inches. Repeat for a total of eight times.



HAMSTRINGS: Lie on your back. With your left knee bent, foot flat on the floor, straighten your right leg. Keeping it as straight as you can, bring your knee toward your nose until you feel a stretch. Use your arms if you can to bring it just a hair further. Hold, say “Saltwater Taffy”, and release, but not very far. Just come out of the stretch a little. Repeat, saying “Saltwater Taffy” for a total of eight repetitions.



CALF: Push your right heel straight up, as if you are aiming to touch the ceiling with it. Keep your toes pulled back toward your shin. If you can reach, you may grasp your toes and pull them back to intensify the stretch. Repeat eight times, coming out of the stretch just a little between each one, holding for as long as it takes to say “Saltwater Taffy” with each repetition.



TOES TO NOSE (EXTERNAL HIP ROTATORS):

Bring your right leg to your chest. With your left hand on the outside of your right ankle, pull your toes toward your nose as you simultaneously push your knee away from you with your right hand (or forearm) eight times, Saltwater Taffy.



REPEAT ALL THREE MOVES ON THE LEFT LEG.

GRAB MY LEG, BABY, PLEASE (ADDUCTORS):

So named because it's my favorite acronym for all the adductors (Gracilis, Adductor magnus, Adductor longus, Adductor brevis, and Pectineus), this stretch demands caution because it is easy to overdo.

Bring both knees to your chest. Straighten out your right leg. Drop it slowly to the right. Use your right hand to support the leg so it doesn't go too far. Keep the left leg bent, and drop it gently to the left simultaneously. Do this eight times, Saltwater Taffy. If you feel like quitting after two or three repetitions, feel free. Repeat on the other side.



HAPPY BABY (LOW BACK, ADDUCTORS, GLUTEALS): Bend both legs, positioning yourself so that the soles of your feet face the ceiling. Spread your legs so that they fall to either side of your body. Grasp either your lower legs, ankles, inside heels, or outside heels, whichever you can reach. Use your arms to pull your legs toward the floor eight times, Saltwater Taffy.



NECK: Clasp your hands behind your head. **Relax your abdominal wall.** Using only your arms, keeping your head and neck completely relaxed, lift your head, bringing your chin to your chest eight times, Saltwater Taffy.



POSTERIOR DELTOIDS: Raise your right hand straight toward the ceiling. Bring it across your chest keeping the elbow locked, then help it with your other arm, aiming for the floor eight times, Saltwater Taffy. Repeat on the other side.



SPINAL TWIST: Cross your right leg over your left, keeping both knees close to your chest, and drop to your right, keeping both shoulders on the floor to the best of your ability, arms outstretched. You may get a bonus stretch for the left Pectorals. Hold for at least 30 seconds. Repeat on the other side.



SIDE-LYING

QUADRICEPS: Lie on your left side. Bend your right leg and grasp your foot with your right hand if you can. This is a two-part stretch: First, extend your leg at the hip. Then, bring your foot to the butt. Repeat for a total of eight times, Saltwater Taffy. Keep your upper leg close to the lower leg, avoiding the temptation to lift it toward the ceiling. Extending the leg stretches the Rectus femoris, which is the one muscle in the Quadriceps group that crosses the hip joint. Bringing the foot to the butt addresses the other three as well.



BICEPS FEMORIS: Extend your right leg up at an angle, as if you are aiming for the intersection where the wall meets the ceiling. Bring your knee to your ear eight times, Saltwater Taffy.



REPEAT BOTH STRETCHES ON THE OTHER LEG.

THE CRICKET: To mobilize the sacroiliac joint, stack your hips and knees. Keeping your feet together, rub your top leg against the bottom one, bringing your top knee directly forward, as if pointing with it, as far as is comfortable. Then, draw it back as far as is comfortable. Do this for as long as you like. Repeat on the other side.



PRONE

MASTHEAD (ABS): Lie on your belly. Come up onto your elbows, keeping them directly under your shoulders. Visualize your abs, particularly Rectus abdominis, which originates at the pubic bones and attaches at the ribs. You are going to lengthen this area by drawing your elbows toward your hips without moving them. Basically you are using your elbows to lift your ribs up and forward like the masthead of a ship. Do this eight times, Saltwater Taffy.



SKY DIVE: Sprawl, making an X with your body. To stretch the right Pectoralis major and minor, bend your left knee and lift it off the floor, rolling your left leg and hip toward the right until you feel a good stretch. Repeat at least three more times, Saltwater Taffy. Switch sides and repeat. If you are *not* feeling a pec stretch, experiment with bending the arm on the side you are stretching, and pushing off the floor with the other arm. Remember our motto: If it hurts, don't do it.



ALLEY CAT (PARASPINALS): Up on all fours, hump your back, then arch it, going back and forth for as long as you like, keeping your abs pulled in towards your spine. Allow your head and neck to follow the movement, dropping with the hump, and lifting with the arch. Repeat as many times as you like.



BEAR: This is a moving stretch. Placing your hands and knees a little farther apart, drop one shoulder to the floor, then the other, moving one hip at a time simultaneously, as if you are hunkering down and then up, or as if your shoulders and hips are dancing in place, for as long as you like. There's no wrong way to do this one, as long as it feels good.



TRICEPS: On your knees, reach as far forward as you can with your right arm. Bend the elbow of that arm so that your hand touches the shoulder if possible. Now, supporting yourself with your other hand, drop your right shoulder toward the floor eight times, Saltwater Taffy. Repeat with the other arm.



RUNNER'S LUNGE (HIP FLEXORS): Place your right foot out in front of you, positioning it directly under your knee. Extend the other leg behind as far as is comfortable. Place your hands wherever they are comfortable. Drop your hips down toward the floor, Saltwater Taffy, eight times, to stretch your left Iliopsoas. Repeat on the other side.



UPPER BACK: Stay on your knees. With your left arm, reach across your chest and rest your left shoulder and head on the floor. Your left hand is palm up. Interlace your right hand with your left and hang on tight. Push away with your right hand as you lean your right hip slightly behind you. The idea here is to get a stretch in the left upper back. Repeat on the other side.



SEATED

Sit cross-legged for the following moves. If this is awkward for you, try sitting on top of a firm pillow or a short stack of blankets.

OBLIQUES: Sit cross-legged. With one hand, reach up and over your head, supporting yourself on the other side with your hand or forearm, keeping both sit bones on the floor throughout the stretch. Do the same with the other arm. Alternate back and forth, Saltwater Taffy, about 12 times total.



NECK TILT: Sitting or standing, grasp your right forearm behind you. Pull down while simultaneously tilting your head to the left, Saltwater Taffy. Switch to the other side and do the same. Go back and forth in this manner for at least ten repetitions.



MAKE A SMILE: Release and relax your arms and drop your chin to your chest. Sit tall. Swivel your chin toward one shoulder. Try to consciously pull the shoulder downward as the chin arrives. Hold for Saltwater Taffy. Then swivel toward the other shoulder, Saltwater Taffy, as if you are drawing a smile on your chest with your chin. If you like, you can reach up and help with your hands to intensify the stretch. Do at least ten repetitions total.



BE SQUARE (GLUTEALS): Make a square with your left leg and your right thigh. Start seated with your feet in front of you, soles together. Extend your left leg so the knee is at a right angle, but the foot is still aligned with the center of your body. You've formed the two sides of the square. To form the third side, flip your right leg so your foot is facing back, roughly in line with your butt, and your knee is at a right angle. Now, imagine that you have a tail. While sticking out your "tail" and keeping your back perfectly straight, lean forward over your left foot three times, Saltwater Taffy.



Now, move to your left a little and lean over your lower leg four times, Saltwater Taffy.



Now, move as far as is comfortable to your left and lean over your knee four times, Saltwater Taffy.



Repeat on the other side.

DOUBLE CROSS (UPPER BACK, SHOULDERS):

Sitting or standing, scoop your left arm under your right arm and bend both at the elbows. If you can, place palm to palm. Lift both arms four times, Saltwater Taffy. Switch to the other side and repeat.



THUMBS: Extend one arm forward, palm up, keeping your elbow locked. Reaching under with your other hand, grasp the thumb. Pull back toward you and hold for 30 seconds.



FINGERS AND FLEXORS: Hold out one hand, palm down. Use the other hand to pull the straight fingers back until you feel a comfortable stretch. Keep your arm absolutely straight in order to maximize the stretch. Hold for 30 seconds.



REPEAT LAST TWO MOVES ON THE OTHER HAND.

TAKING THE REINS (WRIST EXTENSORS): Reach in front of you, clench your fists and drop your hands at the wrists, pulling them toward you until you feel a stretch. Keep your arms perfectly straight. Hold for at least 30 seconds.



PRAYER (WRIST FLEXORS, FINGERS): Position your hands palm-to-palm, as if in prayer. Move your hands toward the floor, pressing your fingers together, until your palms move apart and you can feel a stretch in your fingers. Angle fingers slightly toward your belly. Hold at least 30 seconds.



End of 'Self Stretches'

References

- Active Isolated Stretching* by Aaron Mattes www.stretchingusa.com
- The Thai Massage Workbook* by Kay Rynerson www.learnthaimassage.com
- Trail Guide to the Body* by Andrew Biel www.booksofdiscovery.com
- Information by John Barnes on myofascial release www.myofascialrelease.com

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photo: Jess Leisawitz

Kay Rynerson, Licensed Massage Practitioner, Registered Thai Therapist, graduated from Seattle Massage School in 1988 and earned a teaching certificate from the Institute of Thai Massage in Chiang Mai, Thailand in 1997. She also holds a degree in Journalism from the University of Oregon. She teaches internationally and maintains a private practice in Seattle, Washington.