



Business and **Professional Skills** for Massage Therapists

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BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS FOR MASSAGE THERAPISTS
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This textbook is dedicated to the success of all who use it.



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Every field has its giants—individuals whose influence and contributions stand far above those of others. In massage therapy, perhaps no one over the last half century better fits this description than Sandy Fritz.

With the publication of this book, *Business and Professional Skills for Massage Therapists*, Sandy has given massage training programs a blueprint that, if followed, will increase the success rates of their graduates, and hence, the schools and the industry as a whole.

Although most other books devote a chapter to business, Sandy has expanded the concept to an entire book on the subject, allowing her the freedom to delve into the subject in great detail specific to a massage practice. Sandy explores all the basics such as scope of practice, documentation, ethics, trends in the profession, communication, setting up an office, appointment management systems, marketing, inventory and supplies, safety and sanitation, and planning your career path. She examines the office from both the employee and the employer point of view.

One of my favorite chapters is “Technology in the Massage Practice.” Sandy provides the reader with a basic understanding of computer hardware; software such as word processing, spreadsheets, and databases; and the value of the internet as a communication tool for both gathering and disseminating information.

Then stepping beyond the basics, she tackles what many consider to be the most complicated parts of a massage practice: insurance reimbursement, basic accounting, and money management. The chapter on money management is a “how-to” that should be required reading not just for prospective massage therapists, but for every high school student.

Other important features of this book include:

- Good Stuff from the Government: contains Web links or addresses for free government publications on a variety of topics.
- Evolve Annotated Web links: contain internet references for extended study of different business subjects.
- Self-Reflection: a question box designed to be a “devil’s advocate” for provoking readers to question their own abilities, insights, motives, and liabilities.
- Dozens of charts, letters, screen snapshots from the accompanying software, and other practical examples that can be used in setting up a practice.

Over the last few decades, as a therapist, teacher, and author, I have observed the turnover rate in our field and have come to a few conclusions about it. I know many college graduates who are not working in their degreed field, and that seems like a tremendous waste. Although the turnover rate among massage therapists is probably no higher than in other professions, I still believe it could, and should, be lower.

Massage therapists are good at what they do. Their technical skills are superior, and their clients love them. When massage therapists do not succeed, one of two reasons is to blame. Either the therapist is not taking care of himself or herself physically and cannot keep up with the pace of the work, or the therapist is lacking in business skills. I believe that the latter reason is the most common explanation for attrition from our field. If you cannot balance a checkbook, how can you run your own business? Logically then, better education in the area of business practices can increase therapist longevity and employee retention by the industry.

This book will be one that will be used beyond graduation from massage school. It is a perfect desk reference for the established therapist, whether working as an employee at a day spa, as a self-employed therapist in a small private practice, or as the owner/operator of a large practice with a dozen or more employees.

I have had the pleasure of working with Sandy on numerous projects, and my admiration and respect for her grows and grows. Her warmth and compassion comes through every aspect of her life and her work. She loves what she does, and it shows. Furthermore, Sandy is the best hugger (I hope that is a real word)!

I felt honored when asked to write the Foreword to her latest book.

Everyone is familiar with Sandy Fritz as a visionary pioneer of the massage industry from her wealth of books. It is my hope that her latest contribution to the field, a business model, will indeed increase your professional life span by giving you the tools for success.

Susan G. Salvo
Lake Charles, Louisiana

The therapeutic massage profession is maturing and many changes have occurred as the profession has continued to gain respect and popularity. Massage therapists are expected to conduct themselves as professionals, and your success depends not only on your skills as a massage therapist but also on your business skills. This textbook can help you understand and develop the business and professional skills necessary for a successful massage therapy practice.

There are two distinct career pathways in massage therapy. You can be self-employed or be an employee. Both directions offer the opportunity for career success. This textbook explores these options and identifies overlapping professional skills.

BACKGROUND

The practice requirements for massage therapy continue to increase. In addition to working independently, massage therapists can work in a variety of environments such as spas, chiropractic offices, sports facilities, integrated medicine facilities, and massage franchises. Because of these changes, it became evident that a textbook that targeted professional and business skills was needed.

Excellent professional skills and behavior are comparable in many professions. As this textbook was being planned, Elsevier published a book for the dental profession called *Practice Management for the Dental Team*. Its content was very similar to the book being planned for the massage therapy community, and it became the framework for this textbook. You could say that it was massaged in the direction of professional skills for the massage therapist! As the content was developed for this unique textbook, it was polished after careful scrutiny of many reviewers.

Massage therapy research is proving that the multitude of massage methods and modalities influence the physiology of the human body in similar ways. There are many more similarities than differences. Similarly, the professional expertise, solid business practices, and interpersonal skills remain consistent throughout the service professions. This level of consistency indicates that massage therapy has indeed become a profession—and you are part of it.

WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM THIS TEXTBOOK?

This textbook is targeted to massage therapy students in entry-level training for professional practice. Topics explored range from the abstract ideas of intention, intuition, and inspiration to the concrete skills of how to file client records. The business tasks may be considered mundane, but ask anyone who has undergone a tax audit how important record keeping is. You will learn about communication, conflict management, and working as part of a professional team. You will also learn what is involved in being self-employed or becoming a business owner and employer.

Even though this text is targeted to the entry-level student, those who have been in practice also can benefit from the content. It is productive to revisit the basics and rethink current practices while planning for the future.

WHY THIS TEXTBOOK IS IMPORTANT TO THE PROFESSION

When I began a massage practice in the late 1970s, many of us were maturing hippies from the 1960s. We embraced the ideas of alternative, anti-establishment, and holistic living. Although massage is an ancient healing system, it had become relegated to the background of health services. The social revolution of the 1960s demanded changes in many areas, and health care systems could no longer ignore the benefits of methods such as massage therapy.

Massage therapy is still not totally integrated with other health services, but the trend indicates continued growth and acceptance. This development coincides with expectations of professional standards of conduct and business skills. Successful group practice, as demonstrated by the rapid growth and acceptance of franchises, such as Massage Envy and Elements, requires learning how to work with others and following business protocols.

Your future as a massage therapist will be very different from my past experience. For example, advances in technology can manage many of the tedious tasks necessary for any

business professional. The content in this textbook can prepare you to become part of the future of massage therapy.

CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

Massage therapy has been and will always be a compassionate service profession. The wholeness of the interaction between practitioner and client, combined with the knowledgeable application of massage skills and the understanding of their mechanisms of benefit, will continue to be the foundation of our professional path of service. The heartfelt passion to serve others in a humble and simple way by using skilled touch will not be replaced by technology. The ethical expectation of respect and mindfulness of the client's best interests constitute a thread that runs through the entire textbook.

The textbook also is written as a guide to self-discovery, critical thinking, and decision making. There is no specific protocol for business skills. Just like massage, you need to assess the situation, research information, brainstorm, evaluate, and implement. The textbook embraces this concept by supporting your ability to be your own teacher.

ORGANIZATION

Each of the 18 chapters describes a segment of professional practice. The chapter topics have two main themes: people and processes. People topics, such as ethics, professional relationships, and career motivation, are interwoven with process topics. Processes are activities such as documentation, filing, purchasing, accounting, cleaning, and maintaining equipment. Interspersing the important process information with the interesting and insightful people information should help you remain interested and focused.

The material is organized so that it moves from exploring the business professional topic of massage in Chapters 1 and 2 to a focus on client service and ethical and legal practices in Chapters 3 and 4. A shift occurs to processes involving the use of technology and office design in Chapters 5 and 6. In Chapters 7 and 8, documentation and maintenance of records are described. Various forms of communication are addressed in Chapters 9 and 10, and scheduling is targeted in Chapter 11.

At this point, you should have enough information to begin to seriously investigate marketing, which is the topic of Chapter 12. Chapter 13 is very process oriented and provides points to consider in the daily management of business operations and the costs involved. Chapters 14, 15, and 16 discuss the flow of money. Chapter 17 combines people and process information to describe the components of an interpersonal and environmentally safe environment. Chapter 18 reviews earlier content and lays down the platform for launching your career.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

The content of this book is progressive and future focused. As the massage profession changes, our approach to professional development also must change. In the past, a massage therapist often opened his or her own small business. Today, a massage therapist is more likely to work as an employee. Pursuing a career as an employee is quite different from being self-employed. This textbook is the first to equally explore both options for career development.

Professionalism is emphasized, and professionalism is more than just business practices. Most textbooks on the market are focused on the nuts and bolts of business management and marketing as a self-employed practitioner. This textbook both includes and goes beyond this content to address the more nuanced approaches to professional behavior required in massage therapy practice.

I have been in an active massage practice for 30 years. I also own, manage, and teach in a unique and highly respected, single-owner massage therapy school in the United States. Because I function as an employer and educator of future massage therapists and teachers, the approach I bring to the content is practical, based on experience, adaptive to the changing world of economics, massage therapy practice, and small business ownership. In other words, I am still in the trenches—working, transporting the massage table, making appointments, and doing laundry.

One of the most valuable features of the textbook guides you to resources for your professional development. The Good Stuff from the Government feature at the end of each chapter opens the virtual doorway to almost endless sources of online information from U.S. and Canadian governmental agencies and from colleges and universities. Most material is free and in the public domain. The recommended sites have been chosen as starting points, and I hope that they will provide an ongoing source of support. All of the links are also provided on the Evolve site that accompanies the textbook, which allows you to easily access the information.

The Self-Reflection feature leads you through a series of questions to help you explore your feelings, values, and beliefs about the topics in each chapter.

Activities involve content integration. Marked by the icon of a brain plugged in, they are easy to identify. Space is provided to complete the activities and to personalize the text as one you will review often as your career progresses.

Each chapter begins with defined key terms and learning objectives and concludes with learning exercises. Figures, boxes, and tables highlight content for easy location and ongoing reference.

ANCILLARIES

The student Evolve Website features exercises, case studies, additional activities, annotated Web links, a glossary of key terms from the textbook, and a comprehensive bank

of templates for building items such as resumes, letters, advertisements, forms for documentation, client histories, schedules, and budgets. These samples are customizable, providing an excellent collection of templates for students to try out during the course and to take with them as they go into practice. Evolve icons throughout the text indicate when online resources apply.

For the instructor, there also are many resources on the Evolve site:

- A test bank in ExamView® format
- An instructor manual and lesson plans for a professional development course
- An image collection to use for lectures

Bound into the back of the textbook is a CD-ROM containing practice management software from leading massage office software provider, Island Software. The software is provided in a demonstration program for student practice. Utilities on the CD include the following: Client Contact Record, Documentation, Business Contact Record, Appointment Scheduling, and more. Activities in the textbook include interaction with this practice management software, with icons directing students to open the software and use it.

NOTE TO THE STUDENT

This textbook can become a useful resource as you pursue your massage career. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Department of Labor, continuing employment growth is projected in the service-providing sector of the economy. Service-providing industries, such

as massage, will generate almost all of the employment gain from 2006 to 2016 and will provide more than three fourths of all jobs in 2016. Professional and business services, health care, and social assistance are expected to experience the largest growth in employment. Massage therapy can be classified in all of these categories. What they have in common is professional service—one of the main themes of this textbook. Another commonality is expectation of occupational education. Massage therapy educational requirements are listed as postsecondary vocational awards. These programs lead to a certificate or diploma but not a degree. Some of these programs last only a few weeks, but others may require more than a year of study. Massage therapy education is typically at the high end of the training requirements. Occupations in this category usually require the completion of a specific vocational training program and require individuals to pass a licensing or certification examination after completion of the program before they can work.

In most states, massage therapy is a licensed occupation. It is expected that massage therapists have graduated from high school and have formal training in an educational setting (i.e., school rather than on-the-job training). Some areas of this formal training are the same regardless of the occupation chosen, and one of those areas is professionalism. To achieve success as a massage therapist, you are expected to meet the educational criteria and to achieve professional excellence. This text can act as a map as you embark on your learning journey.

Sandy Fritz

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THE BUSINESS OF MASSAGE THERAPY

OUTLINE

Professional Trends in Massage Therapy

What Employers Want
Service Business
Retention

Leadership

Characteristics of an Effective Leader
Effective Listening

Scope of Practice and Professional Respect

Unique Practice Parameters for Therapeutic
Massage

Summary

KEY TERMS

Business
Communication

Massage therapy
Leadership

Management
Service

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Mastery of the content in this chapter will enable the reader to:

- Explain the concept of massage therapy as a business
- Describe the service concept
- Define communication
- Differentiate between various styles of management
- List characteristics necessary for establishing relationships



FIGURE 1-1. Mentoring and teaching require experience and wisdom.

What is it like to be a massage therapist? What does it take to have a successful massage career? What skills are necessary for success other than providing excellent massage services? What makes massage therapy a profession? What is professional behavior? These and more questions need to be answered for the massage profession as a whole and for individual massage therapists. The learning system presented in this textbook does not have the answers to all of the questions, but it does have much of the information you need to answer many of these questions for yourself, and it provides the foundation necessary for you to learn how to ask your own questions. Intelligent questions, not answers, lead to discovery. If you know how to research, listen, engage others in conversation, observe, and model (i.e., do what you see others do), you can find answers. The answers often depend on the circumstances; the questions typically are more of a constant guiding force. Success is built on questions and how you find your answers.

Certain traits and behaviors can support success in your massage business. Being genuine, honest, enthusiastic, compassionate, knowledgeable, and polite will support success. A mentor is a wise and trusted counselor or teacher, especially in occupational settings. As a mentor (Fig. 1-1) and teacher, my task in writing this textbook is to provide you with information that is valid, time tested, and accepted as beneficial. Sometimes, the instructions sound like a parent telling you what to do. Statements such as “do this,” “you must,” or “you should” can seem commanding and bossy, but some things are best learned from the experience and likely mistakes of others. Your classroom teacher occasionally also may be directive. Think of these “just do it this way” statements as shortcuts. Although you can learn from your own mistakes and successes, it is also wise to not make the same mistakes of those who have gone before you.

A learning system is a multifaceted portal to understanding. This learning system includes the textbook and accompanying Evolve Web site. The Evolve Web site is your gateway to many resources. This learning system can lead you on this journey of discovery. It is based on information from many experts that constitute an advisory board.

An advisory board is a collection of individuals who provide unique knowledge and skills. An effective advisory board provides informed guidance, but it is you who will make and implement decisions. Efficient and effective decision making involves the following:

- Facts and information
- Ideas and inspiration
- Practicality and resources
- People’s feelings and perceptions

If we are going to succeed, we need hope for the future, people willing to help behind the scenes, and those who can lend a helping hand (Fig. 1-2).



LEARNING ACTIVITY

Identify three important factors that contribute to your learning process, and attach a name or symbol to them. For example,

1. Bumble bee—nothing is impossible. Be your own best teacher.

List your three factors below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



SELF-REFLECTION

It is important that you sift and sort all of the information yourself. Successful individuals make their own decisions and take responsibility for those decisions. They seek information and guidance but do not necessarily do what others say they should. When you see the mirror icon, you will find a list of questions to guide this internal dialog.



FIGURE 1-2. Example of an advisory board in someone's life, built up of family and friends. (From Fritz S: Mosby's Fundamentals of Therapeutic Massage, ed 4, St. Louis, 2009, Mosby.)

This learning system has been designed to provide information and guidance, act as a trusted mentor, and provide a platform for an expert advisory board. It can help you find your path to success, but you have to walk it. This chapter furnishes an overview of the massage profession, and more detail is provided in subsequent chapters.

PROFESSIONAL TRENDS IN MASSAGE THERAPY

During the past 30 years, most massage therapists worked alone in private practice. Recent surveys and data from various professional groups serving the massage community indicate that although this is still the case, there is a significant and steady increase in massage therapists working with other professionals in multidisciplinary environments from full-service spas to hospitals. The spa industry and chiropractic practices show the largest gains. Web links that pertain to this section are given at the end of this chapter.

These trends indicate an increasing need for massage professionals to be able to interface with people and systems in a professional manner, including how information about shared clients is exchanged, electronic office and documentation systems, and how to answer the phone, dress, display work ethics, and maintain finances. Massage therapy is also subject to various licensing rules and regulations, which must be understood and attended to.

There are two avenues in the massage profession for career development: self-employment or employment by another person or business. If you plan to be self-employed, you must be knowledgeable about every aspect of the business end of the professional practice. It is not good enough to be excellent at giving a massage. You also have to be a savvy businessperson.

It is easier to be an employee, because many of the business office responsibilities are taken care of by others, such as an office manager, receptionist, or accountant. More energy can be directed to being an excellent massage therapist. Being

BOX 1-1 What Employers Are Looking For

Besides excellent massage skills, employers are looking for the following:

- Communication skills
- Computer (documentation) skills
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Interpersonal abilities
- Research skills
- Leadership and management skills
- Planning and organization skills
- Problem solving and creativity skills
- Teamwork ability

Data from Hansen RS, Hansen K: What Do Employers Really Want? Top Skills and Values Employers Seek from Job Seekers; http://www.quintcareers.com/job_skills_values.html

employed as a massage therapist is the increasing trend for career development. Because many of the management and marketing responsibilities are taken care of by the employer, it is important to support the organization by being a great employee.

What Employers Want

Employers have basic expectations of their employees (Box 1-1). They want an employee who is well trained, with a good appearance that fits the professional environment. A massage therapist must be dependable and have the skills to do the job for which he or she was hired.

Employers seek three types of skill strengths. Job skills are those used to perform a job: being able to give a beneficial massage based on outcomes. Self-management skills are usually a part of your personality and include honesty, dependability, sense of humor, tolerance, and flexibility. Transferable skills are those that can be taken from one job to another or used on any job. Examples include the ability to maintain appropriate business records, communicate effectively, and be a team player and a leader (Fig. 1-3).

As more massage therapists are employed by larger systems, such as spas, massage franchises, sports organizations, and health care establishments, it is important for massage professionals to learn communication skills, conflict management skills, and record-keeping skills and to understand the nature and demands of complex business structures, even though they may not be responsible for the actual business operations. It is sometimes difficult to balance the compassionate nature of massage and the one-on-one interaction with clients with the more concrete and less sympathetic business and professional practices, such as collecting fees, making appointments, and enforcing policies. An employee can maintain a separation between the massage interaction and the business interaction. A self-employed person must play both roles.

Whether you are self-employed or an employee, you have to understand the business end of a professional practice. When self-employed, you need do all the tasks or supervise



FIGURE 1-3. Professional massage therapists. (From Fritz S: Mosby's Fundamentals of Therapeutic Massage, ed 4, St. Louis, 2009, Mosby.)

those you hire to take care of the responsibility. When you are an employee, you can better support those involved in the business operation and have an appreciation of the complexities of their careers and related tasks.

Service Business

The massage professional's role in the therapeutic massage practice of the 21st century is changing and challenging. Massage therapy is immersing as a health profession with a twofold role: to provide health and service and to make a profit as a small business. As a health service, massage therapy provides quality care for the client, following standards of care established by governmental agencies and the profession itself. As a health and service profession, massage therapy embraces the following objectives:

- Supporting wellness, prevention, and healing
- Managing pain with massage therapy
- Supporting function and performance
- Helping clients manage stress
- Providing safe and beneficial massage services

Massage therapy as an evolving business must face the same issues as other health service and business systems, including diversity in the ethnicity, gender, and age of clients and the workforce. The therapeutic massage practice is a business engaged in to achieve a livelihood. To do this, the enterprise must accomplish the following:

- Operate efficiently
- Operate safely
- Make use of technology
- Create a profit

This learning system targets the necessary professional and business skills for a successful career. Business activities

are often referred to as the *front office*. A more accurate term is the *business office*, because all business activities of the practice take place there, including financial transactions, client and staff communication, appointment management, and records maintenance.

The traditional education of the massage therapist has placed great emphasis on developing a highly competent clinician but has often left a noticeable void in the area of professional practice management. Massage therapy in the 21st century faces an ever-changing population, a culturally diverse workforce and clientele, heightened awareness of consumer rights, increased state and federal regulations, expanding group practices, and multiple career paths, including massage franchises, the spa industry, sports and fitness organizations, and health care institutions.

Forward-thinking massage practitioners embrace change as a lifelong process. Successful massage practices are led by individuals who look at all situations as opportunities to employ excitement and enthusiasm in meeting new challenges while remembering and respecting our rich history.

THE KEYS OF SERVICE

Massage therapy is a health profession and a personal service profession. Massage treatment may be the objective for a client, but the massage professional must be aware the client also is seeking the most important product—service, an intangible product in the form of care and compassion. Service can be considered a method of accommodating or providing assistance for another person.

Competence, thoughtfulness, dedication to a client's needs, and meticulous attention to detail are key elements of professional service. Top-quality massage skills, ongoing skill development, integrity, compassion, empathy, and commitment to ethical behavior are necessary to provide quality service.



SELF-REFLECTION

Consider a time when you received great service. It might have been when you were shopping for clothes or at a restaurant. Perhaps it was from the housekeeping staff at a hotel, the attendant at a drive-through car wash, an emergency room nurse, an excellent tour guide, or a plumber who was available for an emergency on the weekend. Assess the experience and behavior of the individual, and identify the key components of service. Perform the same assessment about a time when you received poor service. What made the service poor? Which of the components of quality service were missing? Recall times when you gave excellent service and poor service. What were the factors that made the difference (Box 1-2)?

BOX 1-2 Activities That Promote Service

- Maintaining regularly scheduled business hours
- Providing a flexible schedule for unusual circumstances
- Maintaining the appointment schedule without delays
- Maintaining professional ethics
- Practicing quality care
- Recognizing the client's needs
- Taking time to listen to the client's concerns
- Respecting the client's right to choice
- Informing clients about alternative treatment plans
- Allaying fears and educating about massage therapy
- Hiring qualified and compassionate support staff
- Encouraging an environment of caring
- Maintaining a clean and pleasant environment
- Maintaining professional skills routinely
- Operating safely
- Participating in community services
- Being genuine and honest

MESSAGE THERAPY AS A SERVICE PROFESSION

Message therapists touch with skill, compassion, intention, integrity, and respect with an expected result and are compensated monetarily for the service. Massage is a service profession. The massage therapist develops professional relationships with the client. A relationship involves mutual dealings between people, parties, or countries and the types of expectations that each has of the other. Professional relationships are different from friendship, family, or romantic relationships. Friendships are freely chosen associations with others that are mutually beneficial. Family relationships are based on a parental, sibling, or extended family connections, communication patterns, and cultural roles. Romantic or life partner relationships share passion, commitment, and emotional, physical, and spiritual intimacy. A professional relationship is also based on a mutually beneficial association, but the exchange for service is typically money, not personal connection.

Certain factors contribute to a successful professional relationship. Some of the most important are reliability, listening to understand, honesty, effective conflict management, and providing more than expected.

Reliability is necessary for good customer service. Listening more than talking is a vital professional skill. A massage therapist lets the client talk and indicates listening by making the appropriate responses using reflective listening skills. This topic is discussed in greater detail later. Honesty is a professional skill.

Honesty means correctly stating facts and views, and it includes being honest with others and yourself. Honesty sometimes has the ability to harm, and some things that may be hurtful can remain unsaid because they have no relevance to the professional relationship. If something is

relevant to the professional interaction, it is important to be honest even if the potential for hurt feelings or conflict exists. For example, if a client arrives for the massage in very ugly high heel shoes, it is not necessary to say, "Honestly, those are ugly high heels." If, however, the client has recently sprained an ankle and is unsteady on the shoes because of the high heel, it is important to state something such as, "Based on your recent history of a sprained ankle and because high-heeled shoes cause the ankle and knee to be unstable, it would be best if you did not wear this type of shoe."

Conflict is unpleasant, but it is important to deal with difficult situations and complaints. No one likes hearing complaints, and although it is true that you cannot please all the people all the time, if you are going to develop a strong and loyal massage client base, it is necessary to listen to complaints and deal with difficult situations with an objective and open mind. Interpret complaints in an impersonal way. Find the concrete process. What happened? What was done? What went wrong? What could be different?

Provide more than is expected. People love to get more than they anticipated. The gesture does not need to be large or extravagant to be effective, but it must be sincere. Throw in something extra, such as a coupon for a future discount, additional information on self-help, a genuine smile, or a sincere compliment. Small things that are given freely are appreciated.

Massage is a service profession that has a long and rich history. Originally part of the healing traditions of most cultures, massage has experienced many developments and is now regaining its rightful place in the health care and wellness environments. Professional service is more than clinical and cognitive skills; it comprises attitudinal skills that evolve into a commitment to the welfare of others. "No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care" is a statement that summarizes the service concept.

Retention

Clients will remain with the massage practice only if they are satisfied with the services rendered. Figure 1-4 illustrates the many "ifs" the massage therapist encounters in the retention of a client in the massage practice. Clients have choices. If clients choose someone as their massage therapist from a recommendation or by random selection and if they are satisfied with the treatment and care, they may return. If clients are satisfied with the return visit, they may continue to return. However, if there is dissatisfaction at any stage of the service, clients may choose to go elsewhere for massage therapy services. Massage is a service, and success is based on client satisfaction, client benefit, and long-term professional relationships in the form of client retention and regularly scheduled appointments.

If clients do not return after receiving the first massage, there was some sort of dissatisfaction on their part, and you

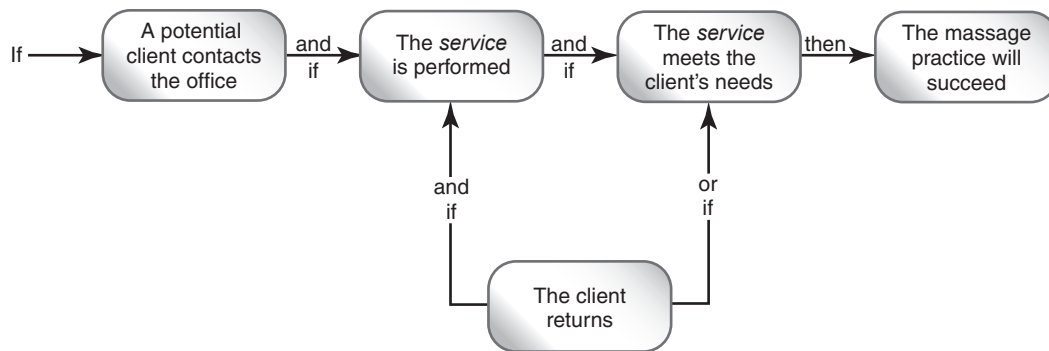


FIGURE 1-4. The service concept. (Modified from Finkbeiner BL, Finkbeiner CA: Practice Management for the Dental Team, ed 6, St. Louis, 2006, Mosby.)

need to seriously evaluate how you are responsible. There are factors related to an individual client's expectations that affect retention, but you cannot change someone else—only yourself. It is unlikely that you will be able to build a sustained business if you do not figure out what happened and seek to correct the situation for future clients. For instance, a client came in and told you he wanted a relaxation massage, but you perform a massage that is more rehabilitation focused, or he told you the pressure was too light or too heavy, but you did not adjust. Issues such as these may keep you from retaining clients. There are exceptions. For example, the massage was a gift, and the individual was not a “massage person,” or there were extenuating circumstances, such as a massage on a vacation that was meant to be a one-time treat.

Despite a few exceptions, if retention is a problem, it must have something to do with factors such as the massage application; the personality, appearance, smell, or mannerisms of the massage therapist; the fee charged; the location; or the facility. Marketing, advertising, and location are all important for the initial exposure to be able to find the first few clients. However, if a client does not return for massage on a regular basis—even once each year for a “birthday massage”—the problem is about how you are providing massage services. Service professions are built on relationships. People must be comfortable with you. You have to give an expert massage uniquely designed each time to achieve the client's goals. You have to be pleasant, happy, flexible, clean, professional looking, and engaging, and you must eliminate any weird quirks that can make people uncomfortable. The massage may be very good, but behavior, eye contact, voice tone, gender, age, hairstyle, how the environment is decorated, or some smell in the office can put people off. Honest self-evaluation about how others perceive you is absolutely necessary.

Clients and their family members and friends must be comfortable with you. If a spouse does not like the massage therapist, the client will be unable to continue to see the massage therapist without conflict. Sometimes, it is too difficult to make a client comfortable. When this occurs, refer him or her.

The basis for client retention is quality care and clear communication—the ability to understand and be understood. Other factors influence retention, including volume, cost, and the client base. These issues are explored in the following sections.



SELF-REFLECTION

How am I going to self-evaluate? Who can help me figure out what displeased the client? How am I going to honestly seek to change behaviors that keep clients from getting regular massages from me? How do I maintain a healthy self-concept while evaluating client retention problems? What do others do differently from what I do to retain clients? What would my mentor say? What guidance would the advisory board provide?

VOLUME

You need to know how many massage sessions you can provide and maintain quality. Are you able to give a very good massage, and can you give five massage sessions per day at least 5 days a week? It is amazing how many of those who have graduated from massage school do not commit to increasing expertise through practice and ongoing education. Your skills must be excellent.

COST

This is a service business even if insurance of some type is paying. The cost-benefit ratio is a huge issue in successful client retention. A massage can cost just so much before people determine that the benefit is not worth the cost. I often ask a student to determine how much she could afford to pay for massage weekly, every other week, or monthly. It is a real eye opener. How much could you afford?

The fee must be balanced by how much the massage therapist needs to make to be able to meet her financial needs. If the cost of the massage is prohibitive, the client will not be able to justify the cost to regularly receive a massage. However, the massage therapist must have a sense of financial stability. Each geographic and socioeconomic area has a slightly

different cost-benefit ratio. Typically, white-collar workers in urban settings pay more than rural blue-collar workers. In the United States, on the coasts, the fees are higher, and in the middle of the country, the fees are lower.

You should be able to average 20 to 25 massage sessions each week. Based on this projection, how much do you need to feel financially secure? For example, assume the yearly net income desired is \$30,000. If self-employed, you need to gross about \$60,000 per year to net \$30,000. If you work 50 weeks each year (assuming 2 weeks' vacation time), multiply 25 massage sessions/week by 50 weeks and divide the result into \$60,000 to determine how much you need to charge per massage. In this case, it is 1,250 massage sessions per year, or about \$50 per session.

These calculations also apply to the client. If a client wants to see you each week, he or she must budget about \$200 per month or \$2,400 per year (assuming 48 weeks per year). If the client sees you only twice each month, the cost burden is \$1,200 per year, and if once each month, the cost burden is \$600 per year.

Several questions must be answered. Are the services provided worth this much to the client? How realistic is it that I will see the same 25 clients every week? How do I keep them coming for massage so that I can meet the cost-benefit structure of the business?

The same type of formula is applicable if you are employed, but the employer must generate at least \$60,000 of gross income to pay you \$30,000. Because employers usually have to gross more income because of employment taxes and additional expenses, \$70,000 is more reasonable.

How much can an employer pay per hour and remain viable? If you desire to become an employer of massage therapists, how much would you pay? Let's do the math. Based on \$70,000 of gross income, the cost to the employer for providing all overhead costs, marketing, advertising, payroll, and benefits (e.g., paid vacation, medical insurance) is about 57% of the gross intake. That is about \$40,000, leaving \$30,000 for you. If the employer has more than one massage therapist working for her or him, some of the overhead can be dispersed, decreasing the needed gross income somewhat. In any case, to have an income of \$30,000 per year as a self-employed or employed massage therapist, you must do 25 massage sessions per week and charge approximately \$50 per session. With some minor variations, this is a reasonable expectation. Clients in urban areas may be able to bear a fee of more than \$50 per session, whereas clients in less affluent areas may need fees set at about \$40 per session.

CLIENT BASE

You typically do not have the same 25 clients each week. It is more likely that your schedule (based on the 1-hour massage) looks like this: 5 weekly clients (take really good care of regular clients!); 20 clients who get a massage every other week (i.e., 10 during one week and 10 the next); and 20 clients who come once each month (5 each week). This schedule includes a total of 20 clients per week who are regulars,

the sustaining base of a successful professional practice. This leaves five sessions per week open for referrals, the occasional client, and the first-time client.

These people are your future, and it is important to impress them the first time you see them with your professional behavior and massage expertise. These individuals may become regulars or tell people about the excellent massages they had. If you are excellent and provide a safe and neutral environment, you will eventually fill the remaining five appointments. The base of clients to support a massage practice (self-employed or employee) requires between 75 and 100 solid contacts. That is not very many compared with other service professionals.

Ultimately, all business is service. It does not matter if you are an internationally known entertainer, political figure, hometown dentist, professional athlete, high school teacher, nurse, or food service provider—it is all about service.



SELF-REFLECTION

Retention is influenced by your desire to be a massage therapist. Who do you want to serve? You may make more money working at a high-end spa, but if your heart is with food service workers, there is a disconnect. Maybe you have waited tables, and you know how hard of a job it is. How long do you think you will be satisfied in the spa-based job? How motivated will you be to encourage retention?

If you have a professional dream that includes making more money than the example previously described, what are you going to do about it? You could charge more per massage. This is possible if your services are worth it. Would you pay what you want to charge for a massage? You can expand income by creating an environment in which you can earn income by being an employer. Supplementing income with more passive services such as hydrotherapy (e.g., hot tub, sauna) or through product sales is a possibility.

What is your career dream? What is your ultimate professional goal, and how are you going to achieve it? Is your dream to have a spalike massage profession? If so, do you have the education needed to achieve this? If not, you need a plan to get it. If money is the issue, preplanning and self-education are beginning points. Go to the library, and read some books or magazines on spas. The Internet is a vast information resource.

What will it take to get retention commitment from clients so that your appointment schedule is consistently full? You have to want to do massage to be successful. It is like anything else; you can do well for a while even if you do not like it, but eventually, your clients will be able to tell that you do not want to be there, and you will not have the motivation to persevere. When considering career options, it is important to ask what aspect of a massage career motivates you to achieve success.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership is vital to the success and growth of a massage practice. Leadership is not about being the boss or being a good manager. According to Hastings and Potter in the leadership management textbook *Trust Me*, leadership is not what we do; it is who we are: “Simply put, leadership is influence. Leadership involves influencing others for good, rousing others to action, and inspiring them to become the best they can be, as we work together toward common goals.”

A leader worth researching is Randy Pausch (<http://download.srv.cs.cmu.edu/~pausch>). He had his TV debut after giving his “Last Lecture,” which was broadcast on the program *60 Minutes*. He was terminally ill, and his goal was to leave a record of his wisdom and advice for his children. He died of pancreatic cancer on July 18, 2008. He had been a professor at Carnegie Mellon University, and in his lecture, he mentions that he achieved most of his childhood dreams and helped others pursue theirs. He said, “We cannot change the cards we are dealt, just how we play the hand.” He lived life to the fullest. In terms of *Winnie-the-Pooh* characters, he was a Tigger personality, not an Eeyore.



SELF-REFLECTION

Think about the persons who have influenced or motivated you to make major decisions. They were leaders because they caused you to take action. How did they influence you? Was it by example? Did they share their experiences of failure and success? Did others talk about them? Did you read their biographies or autobiographies?

Leaders in therapeutic massage practice must be able to motivate themselves and others to pursue excellence and to be forward thinkers by paying attention to the historical past, considering the current moment, and preparing for the future. As massage therapy continues to expand into many environments, such as sports and fitness facilities, chiropractor offices, multidisciplinary health care practices, massage clinic franchises, and the popular spa industry, it will be increasingly important for massage therapists to develop leadership skills to meet the changes in the profession that will inevitably occur.



LEARNING ACTIVITY

For a brainstorming exercise, list all of the changes that may occur in the massage therapy profession within the next 5 years.

Leadership can be defined as doing the right thing, whereas management is defined as doing things right. Participatory leadership is considered to have the greatest advantages for a massage practice. This form of management is a team effort and recognizes each member of the staff as a person whose skills are necessary in obtaining the ultimate goals of the practice. Participatory management requires that all staff members have a part in making decisions. This system provides an opportunity for communication. Each person seeks to understand the others, and staff members are encouraged to express their ideas.

There can be many forms of leadership in the therapeutic massage practice. Self-employed massage therapists with their own small businesses may be responsible for all business functions and for providing massage. Self-employed massage therapists must be their own leaders. In a large, multistaffed, and multidisciplinary practice, such as a free-standing massage clinic franchise, a privately owned spa, or medical office, the massage professional may be accountable to the office manager, who is the leader in the business area. The medical professional (i.e., nurse, physician’s assistant, or physician) may be the leader in the clinical practice. Massage therapists may find themselves responding to two leaders—one in the business office and one for massage delivery. In massage clinics, the clinic owner or massage supervisor may be the leader, or you may find yourself becoming the leader in the massage clinic practice.

The leader in a therapeutic massage practice must embrace trust, a willingness to understand change, humility, commitment, focus, compassion, integrity, peacemaking, and endurance (Box 1-3). As a businessperson, the massage leader of the 21st century must strive to achieve practice goals by

- Considering long-term results over short-term results
- Stressing effectiveness over efficiency alone
- Thinking strategically rather than operationally
- Being proactive rather than reactive to situations
- Being driven by plans rather than problems



LEARNING ACTIVITY

Write down what these words or phrases mean to you.

1. Long term _____
2. Short term _____
3. Effectiveness _____
4. Efficiency _____
5. Strategically _____
6. Operationally _____
7. Proactive _____
8. Reactive _____
9. Plans _____
10. Problems _____
11. Solutions _____

BOX 1-3 Elements That Build Effective Leadership

- Trust promotes good relationships and confidence.
- A leader who understands change recognizes that disruptions are inevitable and is willing to shift gears to pave the way for change.
- Humility is a focus on being open, teachable, and flexible.
- Commitment seeks to develop vision and values in a leader and moves leaders to stand for something greater.
- Focus gives leaders the ability to achieve and direct their time and energy to important objectives.
- Compassion is the desire to understand and care for others, such as staff, family, clients, and people in the community.
- Integrity demands that leaders be responsible for seeking to create quality assurance in their service for clients and in all their relationships.
- Leaders who are peacemakers ensure calmness by listening to and learning from others, and they seek sound solutions rather than making quick decisions.
- Endurance refers to courage, perseverance, and strength when situations, people, or the environment become chaotic or difficult.

Even if self-employed, the effective therapeutic massage practitioner cannot think and act independently. Marketing a service such as massage means considering human, financial, and technical resources in a worldwide market. Clients seen in the therapeutic massage practice come from diverse backgrounds and present complex and diverse treatment options. The therapeutic massage practice must also embrace a virtual office concept that serves the local community and the client base. Technology allows for appointment booking and changes, educational services, and networking with other like-minded professionals and businesses. For example, the virtual office may provide links to other forms of bodywork or types of health care, such as acupuncture, Ayurveda, chiropractic, osteopathy, mental health, nutrition, or yoga. This form of research and referral creates a mutually beneficial network that connects many providers, even if they are located in separate locations.

Characteristics of an Effective Leader

Typically, the first contact a client has sets the stage for the rest of the professional interaction. It is difficult to find any job or career today in which communication is not important, and it has been found that 80% of the people who fail in professional practice do so not because of a lack of technical skills, but because they do not relate well with people.

Your attitude can give the client a positive impression or convince the client to seek massage care elsewhere. Whether communicating with clients, staff, or friends, you must develop basic people skills for successful communication. In addition to the elements found in a leader (discussed earlier), the massage therapist must have skills that include

self-confidence, genuineness, enthusiasm, assertiveness, honesty, acceptance or tolerance of others, the ability to be a good listener, and willingness to be a team player.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

Self-confidence is the ability to believe you can do a job well. To have self-confidence, you must accept yourself. You must have a healthy mental picture of yourself and learn to accentuate your positive attributes. Having self-confidence includes identifying your strengths and building on them and accepting your weaknesses, not dwelling on them, and providing necessary strategies to overcome them. This may take the form of using support staff such as a receptionist or assistant to handle activities (e.g., schedule organization and paperwork, facility management, and cleaning services or other professional services, such as bookkeeping and tax preparation). It will take more time and energy to attempt activities that you are not good at (and will likely never be good at) than it will to generate enough income to pay others to help.

A massage professional with self-confidence assumes responsibility, adapts to change, accepts challenges, and is an effective decision maker. For instance, massage professionals who are self-confident research and gather relevant data and then confidently make suggestions for changes and implement new procedures without hesitancy because they know what is going on. They are willing to take risks and are able to recommend changes in a routine or procedure with confidence that the idea is worthwhile and merits consideration.

GENUINENESS

Being genuine means being sincere and straightforward. This is important when dealing with people in a service profession. A genuine, caring person is not afraid to reach out, demonstrate a caring attitude, and display a genuine concern for another person's feelings. Put yourself in the client's place, and show the kind of concern you would like to receive. As a massage professional, you can be genuine and maintain professional boundaries by remembering that in professional practice, the energy flows toward the client (i.e., it is about them, not about you).

Clients feel comfortable with a genuinely caring massage professional and are likely to open up and share their innermost feelings. This sharing is sacred space that belongs to the client, and the massage professional needs to be respectful and compassionate but not intrusive. Being intrusive means that the massage therapist offers suggestions and advice by sharing personal stories and does not listen to the client. Clients may simply need a person to listen, a friendly smile, or a comforting pat on the shoulder.

ACCEPTANCE OF A CULTURALLY DIVERSE POPULATION

Massage professionals must communicate with people who speak English as a second language. It may be necessary to use another dictionary or reference if an interpreter is not

available. Electronic dictionaries are available, and such references can aid in communicating with clients to determine basic information for informed consent and assessment procedures.

You will find that each person's values are established from his or her background and previous experience. You must be willing to accept others as worthy human beings without a desire to change them to fit into your value system. Accept them as they are, not for what you think they ought to be. Communication is often difficult when a person acts or appears "different" from what is perceived as the norm. For instance, when a client with a prosthesis replacing his or her right arm visits the office, the prosthesis may attract your attention, and you may even stare at the device. Your focus is on the disability and not on the client. In the therapeutic massage profession, it is important to concentrate on seeing the person, not the disability.

ENTHUSIASM

Being enthusiastic means you are interested in your work, you are expressive, and you leave your problems at home. To be enthusiastic does not mean you are a phony or a constant chatterbox; it means that you have a sincere interest in your work and the world around you. Massage therapists who are enthusiastic about their work are likely to read professional journals, seek knowledge about new technology or specific areas of interest, participate in community activities or professional organizations, and become an involved professional. To be enthusiastic you must act enthusiastic.

An enthusiastic massage therapist takes time to learn about the clients and their interests, and when the clients ask questions, the therapist seeks to find the answers. An enthusiastic person is happy to get to work, enjoys sharing others' experiences, appreciates good humor, and is not totally exhausted at the end of the day. An enthusiastic person has a positive outlook on life.

ASSERTIVENESS

Being assertive does not mean being aggressive. An assertive person is bold and enterprising in a nonhostile manner. To be assertive often requires tact, initiative, and willingness to take a risk. Assertiveness is not an emotional response. It is a very logical process that requires research and planning. If you work in a spa, for example, and want to suggest a change in the services offered, it is important to do your homework first. Before suggesting change, prepare an alternative and justify it. If a client or coworker is not behaving appropriately in the environment (e.g., constantly being late, not attending to hygiene, telling offending jokes), it can be difficult to assertively discuss the matter. These types of issues can feel personal to the massage professional and be taken personally by the client or coworker. Being assertive is a logical process, and the avoidance or confrontation is based on feelings.

RECOGNITION OF OTHERS' NEEDS

All people need some form of recognition. In the professional setting, it means that you should be willing to work cooperatively with others to accomplish the objectives of the practice. Ignoring another person's needs does not facilitate good interpersonal relations.

SENSE OF HUMOR

A therapeutic massage practice can provide opportunity for some unique occurrences. After all, you are working with people's bodies. Look at the situation with a sense of humor, but be careful to laugh at the situation and not at the person. Your clients and colleagues should not be made the brunt of a joke.

Consider adding humor to the office with cartoons on the bulletin board. Humor lessens conflict and eases tension, and it is perhaps the best stress management strategy in any therapeutic massage practice.

WILLINGNESS TO BE A TEAM PLAYER

Massage therapy is increasingly a team-oriented business. There is no "I" in the word *team*. Building a team is a simple concept when you realize that teams are made up of individuals with diverse skills and talents. Each team member must have clearly defined skills that need to be identified and measured against the skills of other team members. After a person realizes his or her role on the team and how best to accomplish specific tasks, achieving team goals can be accomplished and eagerly anticipated.

The anatomy and physiology of the body is a great metaphor for a team. The little toe is confident and contributes to walking. It does not aspire to be a liver but does depend on the liver for a clean environment. The liver does not think it is more important than the kidney; instead, the liver and kidney cooperate. Cells that are not team players and consider only themselves become tumors. They can get out of control and use resources selfishly. None of us wants to be a tumor, which can become malignant, spread, and destroy. Health and homeostasis is a team effort.

Effective Listening

Listening is more than hearing. A good listener hears the facts and perceives the feeling behind the stated facts. Good listening is a combination of hearing what a person says and becoming involved with the person who is talking. Sometimes, hearing loss or a preoccupation with your problems, goals, or feelings can make it difficult for you to hear what is communicated. In a busy therapeutic massage practice, you may ignore what a person is saying because you are too preoccupied with your work, deadlines, or future activities to listen effectively to a client's needs. Often, you hear only what you want to hear or have time to hear. Listening to understand is a very important skill and much more important than talking.



FIGURE 1-5. A massage therapist “listens with her eyes” during an intake interview with a client.

Sometimes, you forget pay attention with your eyes. You need to see what the person is saying; you need to look at the speaker when he or she is talking (Fig. 1-5). When you observe a person’s body language, you observe facial expressions, gestures, and posture that can give you clues to that person’s feelings. Consequently, you understand what people are saying by observing the emotions they display.

In reflective listening, the listener absorbs what has been said, reflects on it, and restates or paraphrases the feeling or content of the message in a way that demonstrates understanding and acceptance. Often in Western culture, listening is considered to be the passive part of a conversation, and speaking is seen as active. Reflective listening practices require focus, intent, and very active participation. The term *reflective listening* stems from work done by psychologist Carl Rogers, who developed client-centered therapy. Rogers believed that by listening intently to the client, a therapist could determine best what the client needed. This type of listening is beneficial because the parties interact to create a better understanding of the situation. A scenario in a therapeutic massage practice might look like this:

Client: I just don’t know whether to schedule a massage weekly when finances are so tight.

Massage therapist: You feel as if you benefit by weekly massage but are not sure you can justify the cost. Is that right?

Client: Uh, uh.

The massage therapist has restated the basic statement of the client. The statement was in her own words

BOX 1-4 Principles of Reflective Listening

- More listening than talking—ears and mind open but mouth shut
- Restating and clarifying what the other has said; not asking questions, interpreting, or telling what the listener feels, believes, or wants
- Trying to understand the feelings contained in what the other is saying, not just the facts or ideas
- Responding with acceptance and empathy, not with indifference, cold objectivity, or fake concern or discounting the importance (i.e., Don’t worry; it will work out.)
- Avoid why questions. The question “Why?” can be particularly damaging, because it defies the other to find a justification or logical explanation. Instead ask, “Can you tell me more about it?”
- Respond to feelings, not just to content. Feelings, such as anger, disappointment, discouragement, fear, joy, elation, or surprise emerge in the emotional tone that the speaker expresses. Content refers to ideas, reasons, theories, assumptions, and descriptions. Especially initially in the conversation, people want understanding, not solutions. Carl Rogers observed that a person who receives a response at the emotional level has “the satisfaction of being deeply understood.”

From *Active Listening* (drawn from *Communication in Organizations* by Dalmar Fisher), <http://www.analytictech.com/mb119/reflect.htm> and <http://www.archindy.org/family/files/marriage/reflective%20listening.pdf>

and was not judgmental. When correctly paraphrased, the speaker usually responds in the affirmative. If not, the paraphrase needs to be restated until the message is received clearly.

At first, using these active listening techniques may seem cumbersome or artificial. After practicing them, you soon will realize the benefits of reflective listening. Good listening skills require that you understand a person before you speak. In reflection, the listener tries to clarify and restate what the other person is saying. This can have a threefold advantage: (1) it can increase the listener’s understanding of the other person; (2) it can help the other to clarify his or her thoughts; and (3) it can reassure the other that someone is willing to attend to his or her point of view and wants to help. Such action can result in improved relations with clients and coworkers and may result in fewer conflicts (Box 1-4).

METHODS OF REFLECTIVE LISTENING

When using reflective listening, Carl Rogers and others who have refined the system indicate it contains four components: empathy, acceptance, congruence, and concreteness.

Empathy

The empathic listener tries to get inside the other’s thoughts and feelings with the intention of understanding the situation. Phrases such as “I understand” or “I get what

you're saying" indicate empathy. Empathy may seem easy, but it is difficult to achieve. It is hard to switch from the view point of "me" to "them." People tend to advise, tell, agree, or disagree from their own point of view.

Acceptance

Acceptance means having respect for a person just as they are. Acceptance should be as unconditional as possible. The listener does not agree or disagree (even silently). Just listen. This is hard. People naturally want to make sense of something based on their own experiences.

Congruence

Congruence refers to openness, frankness, and genuineness on the part of the listener. The listener is willing to acknowledge when his or her ability to listen is being altered by his or her own issues. For example, if angry or irritated, the congruent person admits to having this feeling rather than pretending not to have it. In some cases, the principle of congruence can be at odds with the principles of empathy and acceptance. For example, if the listener is annoyed with the other person, he or she probably has to suspend empathy and acceptance until things are sorted out.

Concreteness

Concreteness means focusing on specifics rather than vague generalities. The listener can encourage concreteness by asking the speaker to be more specific.

Although the ability to be empathic, accepting, congruent, and concrete is valuable, the listener must be prepared to deviate from the four principles if that is what the other person wants. For example, if the other person asks for an opinion, the listener should give it but make sure that it is acknowledged (i.e., "This is just my opinion.").



LEARNING ACTIVITY

This quiz is intended to build your skill in applying the concepts previously discussed.

A fellow massage therapist says, "Why do you get more clients than I do?" Which of the possible responses listed represent reflective listening, and which do not?

- I'll talk to your clients for you to see what they like and don't like.
- It sounds as if this is really getting you down.
- You sound as if you think I am doing something wrong.
- It's difficult getting those first clients.
- Have you discussed it with the receptionist?
- Do you feel you are struggling to understand people?
- If you are doing a good job, the client will rebook.
- You sound interested in discussing how to build your practice.

INEFFECTIVE LISTENING

Just as some things make communication effective, there are common things we do that make communication more difficult:

- *Stereotyped reactions*: Constantly repeating a phrase such as "you feel that ..." or "you're saying that ..."
- *Pretending understanding*: If you get lost, say, "Sorry, I didn't get that. What are you saying?"
- *Discounting*: Missing the feelings or making responses that understate them
- *Long-windedness*: Giving very long or complex responses that emphasize the listener's massive effort to understand more than they clarify the other person's point of view. Short, simple responses are more effective.
- *Not paying attention to nonverbal cues*: Facing or leaning away from the other, not maintaining eye contact, looking tense, sighing, looking at your watch, or presenting a "closed" posture by crossing the arms
- *Problem solving*: Telling people what to do instead of listening, making suggestions about how you solved a similar situation
- *Planning your response*: If you want to get 100% of what a speaker is saying to you, you cannot give him or her 25% or 50% of your attention. It means not letting your mind wander to irrelevant topics and not letting your attention wander to your own (relevant) thoughts while the speaker is talking.
- *Defending yourself*: A related problem is allowing yourself to become defensive in the face of comments that can be interpreted as antagonistic. Defensiveness, even when it is justified by a speaker's attack, is a major barrier to understanding. It is a natural reaction.
- *Interrupting*: Interrupting the person is counterproductive. Even if the person seems to be rambling on, it may be his or her way of sorting information. Listen first; take a moment, and then respond.
- *Telling your story*: A common misuse of reflective listening, especially of empathy statements, is trying to "top" the speaker's story by relating it to one of your own. "I know just how you feel. I had the same thing happen to me." Then the "listener" goes off on a tangent, talking about him or herself. Clients do not like this. They will be polite, but remember that the session is about them, not you. Limit discussion about yourself to professional topics that relate to the client. Do not discuss your personal life.

Several phrases can be used when effectively listening (Box 1-5):

- I understand the problem as ...
- I'm sensing ...
- I wonder if ...
- I get the impression that ...
- Correct me if I'm wrong, but ...
- From your point of view ...

- In your experience ...
- As you see it ...
- You believe ...
- I'm picking up that you ...
- Where you're coming from ...
- You mean ...
- You feel ...
- What I hear you saying is ...
- Let me see if I understand. You ...

Other phrases can be used when you have difficulty understanding:

- I'm not sure if I'm with you, but I ...
- This is what I think I hear you saying ...
- I somehow sense that you feel ...
- Maybe you feel ...
- Maybe this is a long shot, but ...
- I'm not certain I understand; you're feeling ...
- As I hear it, you ...
- Is that what you mean?
- Let me see if I understand you; you ...
- Is that the way it is?
- Is that the way you feel?
- Let me see if I'm with you; you ...



SELF-REFLECTION

What are my conversational downfalls? Do I interrupt? Do I speak too loudly or too softly? Am I hard to understand? Am I bossy or overbearing? Do I come across as a know-it-all? When I am honest with myself, what do I do that annoys others? What do others do to annoy me? Do I nitpick, tease, gossip, criticize, complain, and whine?

What are my conversational strengths? Am I really a good listener? Do I listen more than I talk? Do I really listen or just pretend to? How do I let others know that I really do understand? How do I support a team effort? Do I laugh good-heartedly? How do I recognize when someone else needs my support? Do I provide effective feedback and suggestions that are logical and valid? How do I do that? How do I express my opinions and feelings?

SCOPE OF PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONAL RESPECT

The scope of practice defines the knowledge base and practice parameters of a profession. Each health and service profession has a unique information or knowledge base, but members of many professions share common knowledge and methodology. Because of this shared information, the lines defining a profession's scope of practice are not always clear, and overlap can occur.

BOX 1-5 I Messages

The system of I messages often is used for active and reflective listening. I statements have three parts:

- A description of the condition that the individual dislikes
- An expression of the feeling the individual has
- A statement of the reason for the feeling

The pattern is this: When _____ happens, I feel _____. The result is _____, and what I would prefer is _____.

When delivering I messages, remain pleasant, respectful, and honest. Be aware of your body language, tone of voice, and quality of touch.

Each member of a particular profession acquires a specific knowledge base and must define her personal scope of practice. A professional must be able to evaluate her acquired body of knowledge and skills realistically to determine the parameters of ethical practice within the scope of practice. True professionals understand the limits of their technical skills and scopes of practice and choose to work with other professionals for the best possible outcome for the client.

Much of the literature defines the scope of practice of massage by what cannot be done to avoid infringing on the scope of practice of other health and service professions (Box 1-6). The scope of practice authorized by a medical or surgical degree is broad and extensive. It authorizes the physician to use drugs and medical preparations and the surgeon to sever and penetrate human tissue during treatment. It further authorizes them to use other methods to treat disease, injuries, deformities, and other physical and mental conditions. The law grants such a broad authorization to physicians because the education and testing requirements for a physician's license ensure that the individual is qualified to act as a healer.

No one but the physician has the legal right to perform any act that falls within the parameters of a medical license. The principle underlying this is simple: a person may not dispense therapeutic or medicinal advice about the effect of his or her services on a specific disease, ailment, or condition unless that person has adequate training, knowledge, and experience to ensure that the advice given is sound and reliable.

All the professionals listed in Box 1-6 must meet educational standards that far exceed the current accepted requirements for massage in most areas. Professionals with more education are allowed to do more within their specialized fields. Those with less education work under supervision or within a limited scope of practice. The scope of practice for therapeutic massage should complement but not infringe on the boundaries of the work of these professionals. It is hoped that more flexibility and overlap of professional practice will be allowed in the future for the benefit of clients. The trend

BOX 1-6 Occupational Definitions and Scope of Practice

The following are typical regulations governing scope of practice. Most of these regulations have been taken from the administrative rules of the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulation and the Occupational Regulations section of the Michigan Public Health Code. The information on acupuncture and Asian medicine is based on Florida legislation and the book *Planning Your Career in Alternative Medicine*, by Dianne J. B. Lyons. Each state has slightly different regulations, but they are consistent enough to provide a sense of uniformity across the United States. More specific information on occupational regulations and health codes can be obtained from the department responsible for licensing and regulation in each state.

ACUPUNCTURE

Acupuncture is a form of primary health care based on traditional Chinese medical concepts. Acupuncture is employed in diagnosis and treatment, as are adjunctive therapies and diagnostic techniques, to promote, maintain, and restore health and prevent disease. Acupuncture includes the insertion of acupuncture needles and the application of moxibustion (medicinal herbs burned on or near the skin) to specific areas of the human body.

ATHLETIC TRAINING

Athletic training is the study of athletic performance, injury prevention, and rehabilitation. It includes training regimens; evaluation and assessment of injury; treatment, rehabilitation, and reconditioning of athlete injury; therapeutic exercise; and use of therapeutic modalities.

CHIROPRACTIC

Chiropractic is the discipline within the healing arts that deals with the nervous system, its relationship to the spinal column, and its interrelationship with the other body systems. Chiropractic uses radiography to detect spinal subluxation and misalignment and adjusts related bones and tissues to establish neural integrity through techniques that use the inherent recuperative powers of the body to restore and maintain health. Examples of these techniques include the use of analytic instruments, the provision of nutritional advice, and the prescription of rehabilitative exercise. Chiropractic does not include the performance of inciseive surgical procedures or any invasive procedure that requires instrumentation or the dispensing or prescription of drugs or medicine.

COSMETOLOGY

Cosmetology is a service provided to enhance the health, condition, and appearance of the skin, hair, and nails through the use of external preparations designed to cleanse and beautify. It includes the application of beautification processes, such as makeup and skin grooming.

DENTISTRY

Dentistry is the discipline of diagnosis, treatment, prescription, and surgery for disease, pain, deformity, deficiency, or injury of human teeth, alveolar processes, gums, jaws, and dependent tissues. Dentistry is also concerned with preventative care and the maintenance of good oral health.

ESTHETICS

An esthetician is one who works to clean and beautify the skin.

MEDICINE

Medicine is the diagnosis, treatment, prevention, cure, or relief of human disease, ailment, defect, complaint, or other physical or mental condition by attendance, advice, device, diagnostic test, or other means.

NATUROPATHY

Naturopathy is the combination of clinical nutrition, herbology, homeopathy, acupuncture, manipulation, hydrotherapy, massage, exercise, and psychologic methods, including hypnotherapy and biofeedback, to maintain health. Naturopathic physicians use radiography, ultrasound, and other forms of diagnostic testing but do not perform major surgery or prescribe synthetic drugs.

NURSING

Nursing is the systematic application of substantial specialized knowledge and skill derived from the biologic, physical, and behavioral sciences to the care, treatment, counsel, and health education of individuals who are experiencing changes in the normal health process or who require assistance in the maintenance of health and the prevention or management of illness, injury, and disability.

OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

Osteopathic medicine is an independent school of medicine and surgery using full methods of diagnosis and treatment in physical and mental health and disease, including the prescription and administration of drugs and vitamins, operative surgery, obstetrics, and radiologic and electromagnetic diagnostics. Osteopathy emphasizes the interrelationship of the musculoskeletal system with other body systems.

PHYSICAL THERAPY

Physical therapy is the evaluation or treatment of an individual by the use of effective physical measures, therapeutic exercise, and rehabilitative procedures, with or without devices, to prevent, correct, or alleviate a physical or mental disability. It includes treatment planning, performance of tests and measurements, interpretation of referrals, instruction, consultative services, and supervision of personnel. Physical measures include massage, mobilization, and the application of heat, cold, air, light, water, electricity, and sound.

BOX 1-6 Occupational Definitions and Scope of Practice—cont'd**PODIATRIC MEDICINE**

Podiatric medicine is the examination, diagnosis, and treatment of abnormal nails and superficial excrescences (abnormal outgrowths or enlargements) on the human feet, including corns, warts, callosities, bunions, and arch problems. It also includes the medical, surgical, or mechanical treatment and physiotherapy of ailments that affect the condition of the feet. It does not include amputation of the feet or the use or administration of general anesthetics.

PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology is the rendering to individuals, groups, organizations, or the public service involving the application of principles, methods, and procedures of understanding, predicting, and influencing behavior for the purpose of diagnosis, assessment, prevention, amelioration, or treatment of mental or emotional disorders, disabilities, and behavioral adjustment problems. Treatment includes psychotherapy, counseling, behavior modification, hypnosis, biofeedback techniques, psychologic tests, and other verbal or behavioral methods. Psychology does not include the prescription of drugs, performance of surgery, or administration of electroconvulsive therapy.

Modified from Fritz S: *Mosby's Fundamentals of Therapeutic Massage*, ed 4, St. Louis, 2009, Mosby.

toward integrated health care appears to support cooperation in health care delivery.

Unique Practice Parameters for Therapeutic Massage

Therapeutic massage is unique in that it can be used in two distinct professional worlds: wellness and personal services and health care services. Massage professionals are involved in various levels of care and support, each requiring more education and increased levels of competence.

According to Associated Bodywork and Massage Professionals, massage, bodywork, and somatic therapies are defined as the application of various techniques to the muscular structure and soft tissues of the human body:

- **Massage:** The application of soft tissue manipulation techniques to the body, generally intended to reduce stress and fatigue while improving circulation. The many variations of massage account for several different techniques.
- **Bodywork:** Various forms of touch therapies that may use manipulation, movement, or repatterning to affect structural changes to the body
- **Somatic:** Technically, somatic (of the body) work does not unify body and mind because no separation is assumed. Often, this term is used to denote a body-mind or whole-body approach as distinguished from a physiology-only or environmental perspective.

There are more than 200 variations of massage, bodywork, and somatic therapies, and many practitioners use multiple techniques. The application of these techniques may include stroking, kneading, tapping, compression, vibration, rocking, friction, and pressure to the muscular structure or soft tissues of the human body. This may also include nonforceful, passive or active movement and application of techniques intended to affect the energetic systems

of the body. The use of oils, lotions, and powders may also be included to reduce friction on the skin (<http://www.massagetherapy.com/learnmore/index.php>).

The American Massage Therapy Association provides two definitions of massage:

- **Massage therapy:** A profession in which the practitioner applies manual techniques and may apply adjunctive therapies with the intention of positively affecting the health and well-being of the client
- **Massage:** A manual soft tissue manipulation that includes holding, causing movement, or applying pressure to the body

The terms *massage*, *bodywork*, and *somatic therapies* specifically exclude diagnosis, prescription, manipulation or adjustments of the human skeletal structure or any other service, procedure, or therapy that requires a license to practice orthopedics, physical therapy, podiatry, chiropractic, osteopathy, psychotherapy, acupuncture, or any other profession or branch of medicine.

The student of therapeutic massage must be able to define therapeutic massage, identify the types of professional services a massage practitioner legally and ethically can provide, and establish guidelines for conduct in the professional setting. This chapter cannot provide specifics for all of these issues because the massage community itself is unclear in many areas, and professionalism in many ways evolves as a profession evolves. This chapter is intended to encourage the student to develop the level of professionalism essential to the successful practice of therapeutic massage.

There will always be opportunity for the sole-practice massage professional, but the sophistication of professional practice mandates massage therapists to obtain more sophisticated education. The entrepreneurial vision for massage practice will falter if not built on solid business practice and effective interpersonal skills. That is the focus of the next chapter.



Good Stuff from the Government

Some may laugh at the title of this segment in the book, but there are excellent resources available from various government organizations. The most helpful are the Small Business Association and the Internal Revenue Service. At the end of every chapter, this section will provide information from government Web sites and links on how to find out more. Most Government information is in the public domain. It is there for our benefit, and it is freely available. The information in the book may be enough to pique your interest, and there is so much more on the listed sites. A synopsis of the information is provided to give you an idea of the content found at the site. Take advantage of our tax dollars, and explore and use the information, classes, and services provided.

The links to these sites are conveniently available on the Evolve site and are listed by chapter in the textbook. From the Evolve site, you can link directly. Be aware that Web addresses can change, and they may not be active in the future. Search programs can help you find the main pages by using search terms such as *Small Business Association*, *US Gov*, or *Internal Revenue Service*.

e Sign on to the Evolve website at <http://evolve.elsevier.com/Fritz/business>, set up your account, and explore the resources for this chapter.

The U.S. Small Business Association (SBA) is a great resource (<http://www.sba.gov/>). Since its founding on July 30, 1953, the SBA has delivered about 20 million loans, loan guarantees, contracts, counseling sessions, and other forms of assistance to small businesses. After you are on the SBA main page, look for the small business planner feature and then explore these topics (which have been edited for those most relevant to massage):

- Success tools
- Online business planning course
- Local SBA resources
- Forms
- Small Business Training Network
- Library
- 10 Steps to start a business
- Business matchmaking online network
- Training and counseling resources

STARTUP GUIDE AND MANAGING YOUR BUSINESS

The small business guide is intended to serve as a roadmap for starting a business. It is comprehensive and easy to use. It includes numerous electronic links for additional information. Use this powerful interactive tool with its many supporting resources to help you start a successful business. Topics covered at this site (<http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/plan/getready/index.html>) include the following:

- How to start a small business
- Types of business organizations
- Sole proprietorship
- Partnership
- Corporation
- Business plan outline
- Marketing
- Financial management
- Operations
- Concluding statement
- To lease or not to lease: things to know
- Learn the lingo

SMALL BUSINESS TRAINING NETWORK

The Small Business Training Network (SBTN) is a virtual campus that provides quality and targeted free and online training to meet the information needs of prospective and existing small business owners. The SBTN operates like an electronic umbrella under which many SBA and agency resource training programs are captured, aggregated, sorted by content, and made available in multiple formats (<http://www.sba.gov/training/index.html>).

FORECASTING GROWTH: STRATEGIC THINKING

Strategic thinking is a process whereby you learn how to make your business vision a reality by developing your abilities in team work, problem solving, and critical thinking. Strategic thinking requires you to envision what you want your ideal outcome to be for your career and then to work backward by focusing on the story of how you will be able to reach your vision. Overall, you can apply strategic thinking skills to any area of your life, but by making a concerted effort to apply them specifically to your career as a massage therapist, you will have a much better chance of bringing your vision to life. And isn't that what you want?

SUMMARY

The massage profession is many things and has many unique features. Most vocational and professional training is targeted to one professional practice arena. For example, if someone trains to be a nurse, employment typically occurs in some sort of health care environment. If an individual is an athletic trainer, the primary focus is on sports and fitness.

This is not so with therapeutic massage. The realm of career possibilities is limited only by the imagination. Massage therapists can work in one environment, such as a spa or chiropractor's office, and can work full time or part time as employees, independent contractors, or partners in the business. They can specialize, such as with the geriatric population or with a specific approach (e.g., myofascial massage). Massage therapy is provided in

multiple venues, from very formal office settings to resorts where massage is given on the beach. Massage is found in offices, hospitals, cruise ships, all types of spas, rehabilitation clinics, wellness care, horse stables, veterinary clinics, long-term care facilities, various festivals and events, malls, airports, sport arenas, sports training facilities, and wedding showers. The application of massage is limited only by the imagination.

The SBA is an outstanding resource for information, guidance, and training. Each chapter in this text will direct you to the SBA Web site. The site is a portal into a vast pool of information. Use it to the fullest.

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Evolve Annotated Web Links

<http://evolve.elsevier.com/Fritz/business>

- MassageTherapy.com (<http://www.massagetherapy.com/>)
- National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork, Survey for massage therapists/bodyworkers who have practiced 5+ years (http://www.ncbtmb.org/survey_results/industry_changes/SurveySummary.html)
- American Massage Therapy Association, 2009 Massage Therapy Industry Fact Sheet (<http://www.amtamassage.org/news/MTIndustryFactSheet.html#1>)
- MassageTherapy.com, practitioner characteristics and professional membership patterns (<http://www.massagetherapy.com/media/>)
- U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) (<http://www.sba.gov/>)
- SBA, about SBA, overview and history (<http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/>)
- SBA, small business planner, manage your business, forecast (<http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/>)
- SBA, online training (<http://www.sba.gov/services/training/>)
- SBA, free online courses (<http://www.sba.gov/services/training/>)

Workbook

1. List the qualities of a leader that you respect. Assess your own strengths and weaknesses and identify your leadership qualities.

2. Practice paraphrasing the following statements in a reflective listening manner:

Last time I got a massage, I did not get very much attention on my feet.

You know we share a massage room, and it was a mess this morning.

Someone needs to talk to Tina about her breath odor.

The receptionist seems to be playing favorites by booking Roger more than Tasha.

I really like it when you give me a massage. Others just don't understand me like you do.

I love coming here for massage, but it is more expensive than the spa on the next block.
