



SELF CARE FOR MASSAGE THERAPISTS

Studio Massage Institute

Self care is one of the cornerstones to a successful career in massage therapy. Even though massage is about helping others, you can't help others if you are depleted, burned out, lacking in funds, sick, injured or otherwise unable to do a massage.

Taking care of yourself includes everything from having enough money to stay in business and also to have what you need to taking care of yourself physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and every way possible.

The massage profession has a very high rate of burn out. The nature of the work – using your own hands and body can be extremely taxing. There are many massage therapists who end up having to leave the profession because they end up with carpal tunnel or other repetitive strain type injuries. Massage schools often leave this fact out when you are signing up for classes.

The physical part is just really the result of not taking care of oneself emotionally, mentally, spiritually and physically. Physical symptoms most are usually a sign that something is out of balance in your body. It is more than just using proper body mechanics to prevent a physical problem. Before we are physically incapacitated there have usually been signs that we need to stop, rest and take care of ourselves in some way. It may come in the form of things going wrong at the office or home or other symptoms such as insomnia, hypoglycemia or headaches.

Taking Care of yourself as a massage therapist is more than just exercising, eating right and getting a massage every week. It is much more than just using proper body mechanics while you work.

It involves doing whatever it takes to take care of all of your needs. Part of the problem in our profession is not being aware of what you need. We have a tendency to want to take care of others first before ourselves. It is easier that way. We take care of others so we don't have to ask to be taken care of ourselves. We often are living out the "code of the caretaker".

Our businesses often reflect the state that we are in. Carl Jung says "What we are unconscious of becomes our fate". We have what we are committed to having. Becoming more aware of ourselves is the key to a successful career.

Self care is everything you do to take responsibility for your life. What do you do on a daily basis to nurture yourself? What do you do to take care of your internal world – your fears, your false beliefs, your anxiety, your feelings and emotions? Are you living in the present moment or living out your fears of being good enough or knowing enough?

Self care includes creating a spiritual practice along with becoming aware of your repressed emotions and needs. It involves learning to create boundaries to keep you safe and healthy.

Self Care Tips for the massage therapist

1. Manage your money properly and take care of yourself financially. Do what marketing and customer service you need to do to build a successful massage practice.
2. Make sure that you get a massage once a week. It keeps you physically, mentally and emotionally in touch with what you do everyday. It helps prevent injuries, relieves stress and cleanses the body of any physical, emotional and energetic toxins. Have you heard yourself telling this to any of your clients?

3. Make your days off, your days off. If clients call with aches and pains do you go in on your day off? It is important to set your boundaries and keep them. If you don't you may end up feeling taken advantage of or drained. Your needs come first. How will you be able to give treatments when you are not healthy yourself?
4. Take vacations. Your clients will be there when you get back even though your first thought may be -they will all go to someone else and never come back. It is good for clients to go to other practitioners. It gives them some perspective on what you do for them. They may find a more effective treatment or practitioner, but that is what is best for them.
5. Set your boundaries with your families and friends. Have you been massaging them at the drop of a hat, when you come home dead tired and needing a massage yourself? The best thing to do is have them set up an appointment with you, the same as your other clients. Are you working on them for free? It is hard to charge a family member or friend, but you may want to consider a barter system - I massage you - You take me out to dinner or a movie or whatever it is that you may enjoy.
6. What else do you tell your clients that you don't do for your self? Eat right, get exercise, take time for yourself, get enough rest or time to your self?
7. Don't take the work personally. If you can't "fix" a clients elbow tendonitis that they have had for 2 months in one treatment, it doesn't have anything to do with you.
8. Every client that comes to you has something to teach you. They have chosen you out of the many therapists out there. What do they bring to your life?
9. Physically, massage and bodywork is a demanding profession. Make sure your body mechanics are correct. Have someone watch you work or video tape yourself working. Your arms and hands should not be getting tired, your legs should get tired first.
10. Taking time for yourself each day is important in remaining centered during each treatment. Meditation, stretching, movement exercises and quiet walks or whatever it is that make you feel centered are essential in maintaining your spirit.
11. Meditation
12. Journal Writing
13. Counseling/Psychotherapy
14. Retreats
15. Learning about psychology and understanding the impact that you have on clients is an important part of becoming aware of who you are.
16. Supervision and peer supervision groups are essential in learning about ourselves.