

TIPS OF THE TRADE -

WELLBEING FOR MASSAGE THERAPISTS

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Practice details						
Elite Muscle Therapy Level 2, 139 Featherston St Wellington	Body Time Massage & Soft Tissue Therapy, IQ Pilates 25 Apollo Drive Rosedale Mairangi Bay, North Shore, Auckland	Body of Work Lower Hutt	Jane Harris Massage Clinic Hamilton	Sports Performance Massage Christchurch	Beautify Massage Therapy 324A South Rd Caversham Dunedin	Orewa Massage Worx 16 Florence Ave Orewa
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http://elitemuscle.wixsite.com/therapy	https://www.bodytime.co.nz/	https://bodyofwork.co.nz/	http://www.janeharris.co.nz/		www.beautifymassage.com	https://orewachiropractic.co.nz/roger-white/
Are you working in your own practice on your own, or in a group (Massage or MDT) practice?						
My own practice, but shared room with other Massage Therapists who rent the other days I'm not there.	With Pilates instructors at IQ Pilates and MDT in the High Performance Sport NZ (HPSNZ) environment that I contract to.	We are a Collaborative Wellness Centre offering massage as well as Accupuncture, Rehabilitative Exercise, Naturopathy, Physiotherapy (Women's Pelvic Health), and yoga.	Own practice, with a team of 12 therapists.	Own practice.	Owner/operator.	Over 7 years alongside Orewa Chiropractic.
Highest Massage Therapy qualification and number of years in practise:						
Diploma of Therapeutic Massage, Cert. Advanced Pain Management and Dry Needling. Nearly 12 years in practise.	Diploma of Body Therapies, Diploma of Therapeutic Massage (2000), Bachelor of Applied Science (Human Biology) Osteopathic stream (2009). 18 years of massage practise.	Level 6 MNZ member. Trained in Austin Texas, U.S.A. and have 15 years of experience as a Massage Therapist (10 of which are in New Zealand).	Diploma In Body Therapies and Therapeutic Massage (1996). 22 years of experience.	Diploma of Therapeutic Massage. In practice for 11 years.	Certificate in Massage Therapy from Otago Polytechnic. 8 years as a massage therapist, 6 years in own business.	Diploma of Therapeutic Massage from NZCM. In practise for 9yrs.



Wellbeing, it's something at the very heart of our profession – helping people to feel, move and live better. The Oxford Dictionary defines wellbeing as “The state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy” and in their publication “Measuring Wellbeing: A guide for practitioners, the New Economics Foundation (2012) notes that “well-being can be understood as how people feel and how they function, both on a personal and a social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole.” (p. 6).

As the year draws to a close, we wanted to reflect on what wellbeing means for us as massage therapists, and how we go about imparting our knowledge and understanding of the concept in our work with clients. So, who better to ask, than massage therapists themselves! We invited massage therapists from around the country to share their tips for maintaining their wellbeing, key factors to be vigilant about in order to look after themselves, and their favourite self-care recommendations they suggest to clients. We've collated all of their input and compiled a list of the best ideas. It's fantastic to see such considered, wide-ranging and valuable ideas from our peers, we hope that you will read it and get some fresh ideas for managing your wellbeing and contributing to that of your clients. Thanks to all of those who contributed by sharing with us and with you.

TOP TIPS FOR MASSAGE THERAPISTS TO MAINTAIN WELLBEING

1. Get regular bodywork. Receive as many massages per month as you can afford (swap or pay). Not only does this keep your body in tip top shape, it helps remind us how massages feel for our clients. A few times a year I like to visit an Osteopath too, and for work related injuries I see a specialist hand and wrist physiotherapist.
2. Stretch! Before you start your day, between clients, after work. Make time to treat yourself to some intensive and good quality stretching on your days off. Double up and have a lovely hot epsom salts bath afterwards, so good!
3. Keep hydrated. This goes without saying really. Drinking fresh, cool water

“STRIVE TO MAINTAIN IMPECCABLE BOUNDARIES WITH YOUR CLIENTS AND CO-WORKERS.”

ALLISON ANDERSON

can really uplift me during a busy day massaging in a warm room. I try to fill my bottle between clients, and have a few big swigs while my clients are getting on or off the table. Sometimes I like to add a couple of Red Seal Hot or Cold brew teabags - a lovely flavour kick without the caffeine.

4. Schedule some time to offload and bounce ideas off a peer mentor, trusted colleague or a professional counsellor. Clients often open up about their lives when they're in a safe space on our tables. This can lead to a build-up of stress which can be detrimental to our own mental well-being. I have found it useful to have two close massage friends who I can contact whenever I need advice on a difficult client or situation.
5. Plan holidays and regular breaks such as weekends away through the year. Having fun things to look forward to can be very rewarding, and gives me some mandatory time away from the table to rest and relax my body and mind.
6. Eat well. Have awareness around what foods work well and which foods cause issues. Healthy snacks during the day, nuts, fruits etc. No “heavy” meals during the day.
7. Sleep well. Sleep when tired, regardless of others opinions of the amount (I sleep lots!). Avoid sleep deprivation.
8. Exercise/move. To keep fit, maintain the body and process life's challenges (my meditation).

9. Get out into nature. A walk in the forest, a day hike with the family, a week camping, observe the habits of the native birds, watch the sunrise or enjoy the season's uniqueness. Get offline from the digital world.
10. Yoga and meditation – great for the body and mind
11. Limit work hours with recreational and family hours and avoid overcommitting to create a balanced enjoyable life. Cliche.....life is about balance. If we do what we enjoy, we will never have to “work” a day in our lives.
12. Strive to maintain impeccable boundaries with your clients and co-workers.
13. Have fun with my children. Laugh at the silly things in life.
14. Buy an adjustable height table
15. Use supplements to boost one's immune system and avoid coughs, colds and flu bugs. For me this means taking garlic, Echinacea, vitamin C, zinc, olive leaf tablets during March to Sept. I also take 2 Mobicosa capsules daily for good joint health.
16. Maintaining a positive and happy environment to work in. Understanding your core values and acknowledging other therapists' boundaries at your work place.
17. Join Massage New Zealand. Belonging to your professional association is a great way to get support, access information on issues that may be affecting your business or practice, find a mentor, network with other therapists locally and nationally. Being part of a strong national network of professionally trained therapists can really help you feel supported.

KEY FACTORS AND RISKS MASSAGE THERAPISTS NEED TO BE VIGILANT ABOUT

1. Watch out for physical burnout. This is the most common thing I hear from other MTs, especially of the fingers, hands and wrists. Getting injuries quickly attended to is incredibly important for longevity of our careers, and also resting the affected areas. I know this from personal experience, when I let a lower back issue turn into a level 2 lumbar spinal fusion and a year off work! Nowadays, I get



“KEEP HEALTHY BOUNDARIES WITH OUR CLIENTS. TREATING CLIENTS PROFESSIONALLY AND NOT BECOMING TOO INVOLVED WITH THE CLIENTS LIVES/ISSUES”

ALICE BRYDON

things checked out by someone in my referral network, especially when a deep tissue massage doesn't resolve it.

2. Watch out for mental burnout. I truly believe one can only do massage as long as he/she is enjoying the work. If you are feeling burnt out, be honest with yourself and look for ways to find the joy again - collaborate with other professionals, learn a new modality, take some time off, hire a coach/mentor. Clients can sense if you are happy in your work or not.
3. Keep healthy boundaries with our clients. Treating clients professionally and not becoming too involved with the clients' lives/issues. Often this can be hard particularly if we relate to what a client is going thru e.g. the death of a parent. It is important for us to be empathic yet professional.
4. Have an outlet for dealing with mental and emotional stress. This could be exercise, supervision, meditation etc. Therapists are caring people and sometimes attach to clients' issues, we need a way to debrief and offload.
5. Ensure there is sufficient time in between clients to regroup and regroup

ourselves. I have a minimum of 15 minutes between clients and at least an hour lunch break for 8 hour+ days.

6. Don't put too much pressure on ourselves to accommodate client bookings. You can end up working hours you hadn't planned which encroaches on other factors in your life causing unnecessary stress. Saying no occasionally is a skill you must learn.
7. Allow ourselves to not feel guilty about taking time away from work.
8. Keep your own ego in check. I try to keep my hands on and practical education at a top level, but there is ALWAYS going to be someone out there better, smarter and more experienced than you. Learn from client feedback, criticism, and really listen when someone is teaching you something that you're not entirely familiar with. Being open to learning and growing as a therapist has enriched my practice immensely over the years.

TOP SELF-CARE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CLIENTS

1. Make measurable goals with your therapist. Work towards those goals, but learn your limits and keep within those limits. Over doing it can be detrimental to an ongoing wellness plan.
2. Cultivate body awareness. I encourage my clients to be aware of their bodies and keep in mind that any pieces of information they give me can enhance the treatment. Noting down pains, aches, niggles, tingles and clicks between massages are something I ask my clients to do, so I can give them targeted treatments and appropriate home care advice.
3. Educating my clients about their bodies - what muscles are called, what they do and what other structures are affected. This helps clients understand what I'm trying to achieve and what they can do for themselves between treatments. Another benefit of this is when they are referred to another specialist, they can confidently and correctly explain symptoms and get a diagnosis much quicker.

4. Specific and good quality stretches, strengthening exercises and some gentle self-massage are all tools I give to my clients so they can manage issues at home, work, or when travelling.
5. Promoting rest breaks during the day and proper sleep hygiene is something I like to encourage clients to take control of. Great quality sleep is KEY in any wellness plan.
6. Breathe. Physical, mental, emotional, physiological functions are all affected by breathing dysfunctions and we are living in a fast-paced world.

“CHALLENGE US AS HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, WE ARE HERE TO HELP AND IF WE DON'T HAVE ANSWERS HOPEFULLY WE CAN FIND SOMEONE WHO DOES!”

CLINT KNOX

7. Eat well. Follow what works for the individual, seek expert advice on latest proven models.
8. Exercise. Whatever kind works for the individual, just move.
9. Challenge us as health professionals, we are here to help and if we don't have answers, hopefully we can find someone who does!
10. Stress Reduction. That can come in many forms. Using a mindfulness app or attending a gentle yoga class are probably my two most suggested activities.



11. Self-care. Taking time each day for their own wellbeing, whether it be a walk, a yoga class, meditation, aqua jogging, coffee with friends etc. I think it's important for clients to feel well and healthy every day and by putting aside specific time every day (even if it's just 5 minutes a day) it can help them to be more mindful of their own wellbeing.
12. Regular massages. Of course, receiving regular massage treatments is going to be better for the client than just a yearly visit. We offer loyalty discounts and recommend which massage treatment may suit their needs better as the treatment plan progresses.
13. Get additional treatment from another local healthcare provider where appropriate and necessary.

We would like to acknowledge the Mental Health Foundation for allowing us to use their poster from the 2018 Mental Health Awareness Week (MHAW). 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' espouses the messages that we need to be reminding ourselves about, and sharing with our clients. Wellbeing is a practice, a journey, not an end-point. Enjoy it!

REFERENCES

New Economics Foundation. (2012). Measuring Wellbeing: A guide for practitioners, London: New Economics Foundation. Retrieved from https://b3cdn.net/nefoundation/8d92cf44e70b3d16e6_rgm6bpd3i.pdf

Oxford University Press. (2018) Wellbeing. In English Oxford Living Dictionaries. Retrieved from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/well-being>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Massage Magazine and Massage Today have some great resources on self-care and wellbeing for massage therapists, if you want to read further to get some ideas. Also check out the books reviewed later on in this issue.

The Massage Therapist's Guide to Effective Self-Care - a free downloadable e-book

https://www.massagemag.com/selfcarebook/?utm_source=Massage+Magazine&utm_campaign=d91d7bfd44-selfcare_ebook_email_10_1&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f3a6010523-d91d7bfd44-114027717

Self care for male massage therapists

<https://www.massagemag.com/self-care-for-men-101131/>

The 3 Pillars of Self-Care

https://www.massagetoday.com/digital/index.php?i=657&r=t&a_id=15405&pn=22&r=t&Page=22

The Five Pillars of Self-Care

<https://www.massagemag.com/the-five-pillars-of-self-care-3959/>



TALK & LISTEN,
BE THERE,
FEEL CONNECTED



Your time,
your words,
your presence



REMEMBER
THE SIMPLE
THINGS THAT
GIVE YOU JOY



EMBRACE NEW
EXPERIENCES.
SEE OPPORTUNITIES.
SURPRISE YOURSELF



DO WHAT YOU CAN,
ENJOY WHAT YOU DO,
MOVE YOUR MOOD