



Peak Bodywork's Wellness Journal

Winter 2008

Volume 3, Issue 1

Make the Most of Your Massage

Using yogic awareness during bodywork can lead to a more profound experience.

By Timothy B. McCall, M.D.

At the beginning of my second session of myofascial release—a type of bodywork that involves coaxing connective tissues to open—I got to talking with the physical therapist, Rachel Berger of Brookline, Massachusetts, as she worked on me. When we finally quieted down 20 minutes later, I did what I'd done during my first visit: I closed my eyes and tuned in to my body and breath. As Rachel lifted my neck, I focused on the sensations and used slow, deep breathing to help release my muscles.

Later, she told me that until we had stopped talking, my body hadn't been responding as in the first visit, when we both were quiet and which we thought had been a big success. In that first session, I felt like I had been facilitating her subtle work by bringing awareness to the treatment table. It turned out my intuition had been correct.

In fact, I'd wound up in Rachel's office due to the awakening of intuition and awareness of my body that I link to

yoga. In a recent practice session, I'd become aware of what yogis would call an "energetic blockage" in the area connecting my right upper neck to the back of my head. My sense was that my inability to create anatomical space and alignment there was rippling downstream through my right chest and abdomen, all the way down to my right calf. My intuition told me that a good bodyworker might be able to help the area open. A few calls to some friends yielded Rachel's number, and I set up an appointment.

As with yoga itself, the real proof of bodywork is in the direct experience. And the more yoga you do—especially if you complement it with various forms of bodywork—the deeper your ability to sense your inner experience becomes. Yoga practitioners frequently discover that they develop finer and finer perception in areas of the body where they previously felt little. B.K.S. Iyengar calls this phenomenon awakening intelligence in the body.

With that in mind, here are some suggestions for using the wisdom of yoga to get the most out of bodywork.

Cultivate silence. Taking some time for information exchange and explanation is fine. Just don't spend half your session as I did, chatting as you might with someone cutting your hair. Your awareness—and that of the practitioner working on you—can be more profound when you are both quiet. In some situations, music can facilitate relaxation, but if it in any way distracts your

from internal sensations, it's best to forgo it.

Be mindful of sensation. If you find yourself going over your day, resentments, or fantasies for some future happiness, try to return to the present. Tune in as finely as you can to the effect of every stroke of the practitioner's hands. Examine how what's happening in your body is reflected in your breath, your sense of warmth, and other bodily sensations. Notice any unnecessary tightening: Check for tension in your jaw, your tongue, the space between your eyes; especially pay close attention to any areas of the back or neck where you chronically get tight.

Find the connections. During a bodywork session, can you notice whether your chest relaxes a notch as the practitioner works on your neck? Or can you find a perhaps more unexpected connection, like sensation in your right hip when your left shoulder is being massaged?

Use your breath. Your breath can do more than help keep you in the present moment; it can also help get you through some of the moments when bodywork becomes especially physically intense. I'm not sure that I could have tolerated some Roling and neuromuscular therapy sessions I've had without using deep Ujjayi breathing.

Take what you find back to your yoga practice. If you've paid attention during your



bodywork sessions, you may have found opening or awareness in areas where you didn't have it before. During your next yoga practice, see if you can find that openness again and perhaps go even deeper.

Stay open-minded. If you are interested in exploring bodywork, be open to trying multiple styles. Be guided by word of mouth, particularly from people whose yoga practice or other experience has given them good body awareness. It would be great if there were more scientific evidence of effectiveness, but most bodywork methods have never been formally studied. There is also something ineffable that talented bodyworkers of all persuasions do that can't be captured in study results. If you wait for the kind of proof most doctors look for, you won't be able to take advantage of most bodywork styles in this lifetime.

Timothy McCall is a board-certified specialist in internal medicine and *Yoga Journal's* medical editor. He can be found on the Web at www.drmmc.com.

Inside this issue:

<i>Research Award Sore Muscle Soothers</i>	2
<i>Bodywork for Skiers</i>	
<i>A Better Way to Apres</i>	3
<i>Healing Our Bodies With Touch</i>	4

Jen Zalta Wins Top Honor and Publication for Orthopedic Massage Research

Jennifer Zalta, massage therapist and owner of Peak Bodywork, was awarded the 2007 Gold Medal Prize by the Massage Therapy Foundation in January for her research in orthopedic massage. Zalta's case study entitled *Orthopedic Massage Protocol for Post-ACL Reconstruction Patellofemoral Pain Syndrome* will be published later this year in the [Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies](#). Zalta will also present her case study during the American Massage Therapy Association's 2008 National Convention in Phoenix, AZ in September. The Practitioner Case Report Contest, sponsored by the Massage Therapy Foundation, was created to provide an opportunity for massage therapists to develop research skills and enhance their ability to provide knowledge-based massage to the public.

As the field of Massage Therapy continues to gain popularity and the notice of western medicine as a complimentary form of health care there is an increasing need for research to

be conducted to substantiate these claims. While many recipients of massage have first hand experience of the effectiveness of massage, research not only helps to legitimize the role massage has in pain therapy for myofascial and musculoskeletal conditions, but also provides outcome-based therapies for the public and the practitioner. Being able to contribute to the growth of massage therapy in the direction of complementary medicine is a tremendous honor for Zalta and she looks forward to continuing her research.

Zalta's choice in research subject matter derived from a personal experience turned professional curiosity. As a young ski racer, Zalta had a season ending knee injury that plagued her with knee pain and instability. She turned to massage several years later and found not only relief but a professional "calling" that lead her to study massage therapy. After establishing her massage practice in Jackson, Zalta was not surprised to find numerous clients complaining of pain and

complications following their ACL repairs. Wanting to learn more about how to best help these clients, Zalta began researching the subject only to discover that very little was published on the subject of appropriate massage for the post-ACL reconstructed knee. Zalta turned to the Boulder College of Massage Therapy in Colorado for guidance in drafting a case study of her own. BCMT is a leader in promoting research literacy as well as sponsoring and conducting research in the field of massage. Upon completion of her study, Zalta was encouraged to submit her work to the Massage Therapy Foundation which works to disseminate massage research in the medical community and the public at large.

OM Protocol for Post-ACL Reconstruction Patellofemoral Pain Syndrome

Abstract

The intent of this study was to determine the effectiveness of orthopedic massage in the rehabilitation of post anterior

cruciate ligament (ACL) reconstruction patellofemoral pain syndrome (PFPS). The primary complications following surgical repair of the ACL and classified as PFPS are hamstring flexion contracture (inability to fully straighten the knee) and quadriceps weakness, leading to patellofemoral dysfunction (impaired tracking of the kneecap) and retropatellar (behind the kneecap) pain. Treatment included lymphatic drainage, myofascial release, neuromuscular therapy including trigger point release, muscle energy technique and cross-fiber friction. Orthopedic physical assessment tests were used to track effectiveness of massage as well as subjective reporting on pain level and function. Results of this study showed a decrease in pain levels, hamstring flexion contracture, and lateral tracking of the patella. Orthopedic massage was determined to be an effective complementary therapy in the treatment of PFPS.

Sore Muscle Soothers

By Catherine Guthrie
If your habit is to down a couple of Advil, every time you have an ache why not try an alternative approach instead?

Drugstore painkillers like Advil, Motrin, and Aleve are in a class of drugs called nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs). While occasional use is fine, popping them after every hard day on the hill, can cause internal problems—most often stomach irritation. You don't have to toss out your favorite standby, but a slew of alternative sore-muscle remedies lie past the medicine cabinet.

Ayurveda offers several natural means of relief. According to Ayurvedic principles, muscle

cramps and spasms are a sign of excess vata energy. Vata qualities are cool, rough, and dry, so you can pacify vata-exacerbated muscle tension with moist heat. That means comfort can be as close as a hot water bottle or bath.

Don't have time for a bath? While it's not recommended for an acute strain or sprain (for which ice is a better choice), consider this more targeted Ayurvedic aid for sore muscles: Gently rub a tablespoon of massage oil into the muscle, cover it with a towel, and place a hot water bottle on top. Mahanarayan oil, which has a combination of nearly 30 muscle-soothing herbs (including turmeric, fennel, camphor, and

clove), is best, Khalef says, but any massage oil will do in a pinch. (You can purchase Mahanarayan oil on many Web sites; find it by doing a simple search.) The oil penetrates the skin to loosen taut muscle fibers, while the heat from the water bottle encourages muscle release.

In Chinese medicine, sore muscles are a sign of stagnant chi (energy). Tiger Balm for those who suffer asana-induced muscle pain: "Its mixture of menthol, camphor, and herbs helps get the chi moving." For general aches, pains, and bruises, homeopaths often turn to the herb arnica, which can increase circulation and reduce inflammation and swell-

ing. "Arnica is drawn to muscle tissue and blood vessels," says Nancy Gahles, board member of the National Center for Homeopathy. "Since a bruise is essentially broken blood vessels, arnica is able to get right to the source and speed healing."

Arnica is available in tablet, pellet, gel, cream, or ointment form; per the principles of homeopathy, preparations are tremendously diluted but highly effective. The topical applications generally provide more immediate relief, but you might try the different formulas to see which works best for you.

Bodywork for Skiers. A Better Way to Apres.



By Baron Baptiste and Kathleen Finn Mendola

Few sports marry the elements of speed and grace better than skiing. Combine the adrenaline rush of hurtling down a slope with the agility of a beautifully carved turn and the sport's broad appeal is evident. Far removed from the brisk, high-energy land of skiing lies its perfect foil—massage. The physical demands of skiing call out for the counter movements and restorative principles of massage.

Perhaps the biggest benefit massage can bring to your skiing is injury prevention. Skiing asks a lot from the body—cold muscles are called upon to perform a variety of functions, while dexterity, balance, and high levels of concentration are also a must. For those skiers who hit the slopes sporadically, these athletic requisites are often too tough, and they can end up injured and disillusioned with the sport. By observing your body's imbalances, brought on by the particular movements of skiing, and receiving a regular therapeutic massage will bring your body into a state of equilibrium, you can avert injury and participate in the sport for years to come.

In any sport, and skiing is no exception, if you overcompensate in one area, you weaken another, thus preventing yourself from being able to perform at your peak. Since skiing is a lower-body intensive sport, imbalance most obviously occurs in an overdeveloped lower body

and a comparatively weaker upper body, according to Prisca Boris, Yoga for Athletes instructor in Vail, Colorado, and former pro-mogul competitor. In her work with skiers, Boris uses yoga poses and variations on the push-up to build upper body strength.

It's those lower body imbalances, however, that directly affect a skier's performance, and sometimes lead to injury. For example, strong quadriceps and opposing tighter, weaker hamstrings can place too many demands on the knee joint. Knee joints (and the lower half of the body in general) take a lot of abuse as they actively absorb terrain on a downhill run. In a skiing stance, though the bent-knee position with the hips forward helps cushion the shock of impact, the actual power comes from the gluteus, quadriceps, and back muscles. If these muscles are weak, the knees end up taking the pressure that the legs and glutes aren't bearing. Eventually, the joint fatigues. Shortened inner thigh muscles can also strain the knee joint by limiting the leg's range of motion. To avoid knee injury a skier should strive to keep the musculature around the knees and calf muscles supple and stretched so there's less pull on the joint, and massage can help here.



Therapeutic massage works to lengthen all four sides of their upper legs—inner and outer thigh, hamstring, and quadriceps—to ensure minimal strain on surrounding joints.

Together, the hips and knees create the driving force behind skiing, or more precisely, the steering mechanism. "Use of these joints, with some help from the ankle, is always directed toward the goal of trying to put pressure on the inside edge of the downhill ski in order to effect a turn," Boris says. It's technically referred to as angulation—the creation of angles with your body using feet, ankles, knees, hips, spine, or a combination of these in order to push and move the ski.

A skier angulates from the hips, constantly engaging the hip flexors to raise and lower the legs. But overuse of the hip flexors can lead to back strain as the front of body becomes overdeveloped, leaving the back weaker and tighter. Keeping the hip area flexible and supple is necessary not only to avoid imbalance, but to encourage good turning habits. For example, skiers with tight, congested pelvic/hip areas will tend to "follow their skis" with their upper body to initiate a turn, instead of utilizing the lower body. This results in abrupt, awkward turns and a stiff, sore back.

This leads us to core strength and awareness—vital to both skiing and maintaining a healthy back. "In skiing, awareness of your center allows you to rise to initiate movement," Boris says. "You rise to start your turn, and sink down to finish your turn, and all the while the core or torso should remain facing downhill." Awareness of your core can prevent you from turning inefficiently. What's more, core awareness translates to quicker reactions to unexpected situations—

variable snow, flat light and the unseen cat track—and can rescue you from accidents.

Balance, a blend of strength, flexibility, and kinesthetic sense, is especially important for being able to achieve the next level in skiing, whether



that's mastering a new trick or perfecting a powder turn. It's also imperative for avoiding injuries. If you're schussing along and hit unexpected terrain—a rock or sheet of ice—and one ski is forced out from under your body, you can avoid tearing your inner thigh muscle or groin area if you have the flexibility and strength to support the abduction of the leg.

Our bodies are designed to move. Biologically, we require continuous, regular motion. Yet, often in the winter months, we stay indoors, moving less and sitting more. Skiing satisfies our primal need for motion while reconnecting us with nature. Both novice and veteran skiers can attest to the physical and spiritual exhilaration of a day on the slopes.

To get the most from your days on skis, receive a regular massage to keep those muscles and joints limber and pain free. Remember, if you stay in top shape, you can ski for free after age 70. Now, there's something to look forward to!



A MESSAGE EXPERIENCE THAT KEEPS YOU PERFORMING AT YOUR PEAK

Office Location: 420 S. Jackson St, Jackson, WY
Mail: P.O. Box 214, Jackson, WY 83001
Email: Jen@PeakBodywork.com
Web: www.PeakBodywork.com
Phone: 307.690.8228

2007 Gold Medal Winner Massage Therapy Foundation's Practitioner Case Study Research Contest for research on Orthopedic Massage for Post-ACL Reconstruction

Gift Certificates Available

Healing Our Bodies With Touch

Sometimes we might concentrate so much on our spiritual lives that we overlook the wonders of being present in our physical form. When we are more aware of the fact that our bodies are also important in terms of our personal growth, we may find it easier to nurture them. One of the most powerful ways to do this is through human touch, for a loving, comforting touch allows us to access the part of ourselves that yearns for a sense of oneness with the world around us. Even simple forms of touch connect us not just to our bodies but also to the energetic presence of other people.

There are so many ways to incorporate touch in our daily lives, one of the easiest being a heartfelt embrace. Just making a point to hug someone on a daily basis and really feel our energy pass between each other can strengthen the bonds that keep us together. Hugs help us heal any hurt or upset we may have recently experienced by letting us release into the moment of the embrace and realize that no matter what happens to us, we have someone in our lives who supports and cares for us.

Another nourishing form of

touch is massage. While we may think of massage as a luxury, it is actually an ancient form of healing that enables us to open up our energetic pathways in order to receive unlimited energy from the universe. It doesn't matter whether a simple massage comes from a loved one or a massage therapist, but by giving ourselves the gift of massage every once in a while, we are doing something healthy and beneficial for our bodies. Massage helps our bodies activate their own restorative powers, creating a wonderful way to engage fully in our own healing.

Letting ourselves take ad-



vantage of the healing nature of touch creates space where we can truly live in and experience the world through our bodies, allowing us to completely immerse ourselves in the loving sense of joy and wonder that is our life.



Printed on 100% Acid Free-Chlorine Free Recycled Paper

