

It's all about A Nu feel'N

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Helping Veterans and Wounded Warriors

This nation's military veterans and wounded warriors continue to fight, long after they come off the battlefields. They fight to be whole again and to reclaim their physical and psychological health. Many forms of massage and bodywork can help them do just that.

Therapeutic Massage

With its ability to meld body and mind, massage is an excellent way for veterans to reintegrate. Not only can this kind of therapeutic touch address the physical wounds, it can help bring a sense of normalcy back into daily life. "Gratifying physical experiences, such as massages ... may be experiences that patients build up that are not contaminated by trauma, and which may

significant reductions in physical pain, physical tension, irritability, anxiety/worry, and depression after massage. As a result, researchers are hoping to show in Phase 2 of their study that massage could diminish our veterans' needs for opioids for pain management, a significant concern for the US Department of Defense and the veterans themselves.

Many of our military personnel returning from battle zones come home less than whole. In cases of amputation, massage can help control edema, deal with neuromas, improve skin health, and loosen scar tissue. For more on this topic, read "David's Heroes" in the November/December 2014 issue of

*Whoever is
happy will
make others
happy too*

-Mark Twain



Reiki's noninvasive nature makes it an effective choice for treating PTSD.

serve as a core of new gratifying experiences," writes Bessel van der Kolk, author of *Traumatic Stress*.

Research on massage and veterans, funded by the National Institutes of Health, has shown considerable promise for this hands-on therapy. An initial 2014 study found that veterans reported

Massage Bodywork magazine. Find it online at www.messageandbodyworkdigital.com/i/398416.

When visiting a massage therapist for the first time, expect a comprehensive intake process to facilitate your session. If you

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are a veteran or wounded warrior, your therapist will want to discuss the extent of your injuries with you, the medical procedures you've undergone, and any ongoing health issues, as well as medications you're currently taking. All of these questions help inform the therapist how to work most effectively and safely with you, so be honest and forthcoming in your responses. As with any massage, be sure to let your therapist know if anything makes you uncomfortable during your session--whether it's that the room temperature is too hot or the massage pressure is too deep. At any time, you can end the session if the work is too intense or you need a break.

CRANIOSACRAL THERAPY

Craniosacral therapy (CST) has shown considerable promise in helping military veterans and other posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) sufferers. The developer of CST, the late John E. Upledger, DO, OMM, believed this subtle hands-on therapy could make a difference. When he invited veterans to be part of intensive CST programs in 1999, he found that their depression and anxiety levels dropped considerably after the therapy was administered, and that feelings of hopelessness, which had once been pervasive, quickly dissipated.

Further evidence for CST came in 2004-2005, when military personnel returning from duty in combat regions were exposed to the therapy at California's Naval Hospital Lemoore. "The results were absolutely profound," says retired commanding officer Sandy DeGroot, who oversaw the program. "It's very hard for [those returning from active combat zones] to come back fully and be in the present moment. The CST work allowed them to release trauma held in the body."

REFLEXOLOGY

According to author Paula Stone, reflexology is a highly effective therapy for PTSD, a condition that affects more than 5.2 million Americans every year. "Acute sustained stress erodes the very fabric of our being, while acute trauma can tear it. Whether prolonged or sudden, traumatic life experiences wound a person in body, emotions, mind, and soul, and can result in PTSD. Compassionate bodywork,

including reflexology, can help heal the body and the person."

She says two benefits of using reflexology for clients with PTSD are (1) it can be utilized when massage and other touch therapies cannot and (2) the client remains clothed. "Reflexology improves the client's sense of well-being, improves sleep, reduces anxiety, and often reduces the need for pain medications, especially following surgery or cancer treatments." Stone says foot reflexology improves the function of all body systems. "Immediately noticeable are improvements in the flow of bioelectrical energy, blood, lymph, and nerve impulses. Reflexology also works energetically by balancing the body's energy systems. It works in harmony with a broad spectrum of energy therapies, such as polarity therapy and Asian medicine."

FINDING HELP

Other modalities that have offered relief for members of our nation's military include breath work, Healing Touch, myofascial release, reiki, Therapeutic Touch, trauma touch therapy, and even yoga. More are being added to the list every day.

If you or someone you know is a veteran or wounded warrior, and is suffering, reach out. Contact your local Veterans Affairs offices, visit the Wounded Warrior Project (www.woundedwarriorproject.org) or Comfort for America's Uniformed Services (CAUSE; www.cause-usa.org), and make an appointment with your massage therapist or bodyworker.

For more information on PTSD, visit the National Center for PTSD, US Department of National Veterans Affairs, at www.ptsd.va.gov.



The fight is not over for many wounded warriors after they come home.

Pre-Session Yoga Moves for Calm

Mary Beth Braun

It's one of those mornings. Your alarm didn't go off and you have an appointment in an hour. How can you quickly collect and calm yourself enough to be fully present for the day ahead? Breath and yoga.

BREATH

Take this time to center and calm yourself. Start by channeling your yoga instructor or massage therapist and begin with breath (pranayama): inhaling to the count of three and exhaling to the count of six. Do this three times and move on to do a few yoga poses (asanas).

YOGA

You remember a few basic yoga poses from class, right? Try these two: simple seated twist and standing half moon.

SIMPLE SEATED TWIST

Continuing to use your breath, sit on the floor in an easy, cross-legged pose and begin simple seated twist. Raise the crown of your head to the ceiling, elongating your neck and spine. Inhale

and exhale, then twist to the left. Exhaling, move through center, and repeat on the right, continuing to inhale and exhale.

STANDING HALF MOON, BIKRAM STYLE

From there, step your right foot forward, followed by your left foot, and slowly roll up one vertebrae at a time until you are standing upright with your feet firmly grounded into the earth.

Feeling your feet firmly grounded, raise your hands overhead, taking the wrinkles out of your neck and elongating your spine. Inhale, exhale, and side bend to the right. Once there, exhale and feel your side body open up as you press your foot into the earth to enhance the stretch. Inhaling through center, exhale and bend to the left. Return to your center and take one more deep breath in and out.

You feel better, right? Now, let go of that harried morning and begin your day fully present and centered.

Mary Beth Braun is a certified massage therapist based in Indianapolis, Indiana.



Channel your inner yoga instructor.

Try This Breathing Exercise

Anne Williams

Do you ever find yourself unconsciously holding your breath when you're tense? This can cause tension to build in your body and may let the chest collapse, leading to misalignment.

Proper breathing provides oxygen to the muscles and body, helps you stay relaxed and centered, and even helps you maintain correct body alignment throughout your day.

You can also use breathwork as part of a stress-reduction program by following this progressive relaxation exercise.

1. Begin by lying in a comfortable position without crossing your arms or legs, and focus on your breathing to create a slow, deep pattern. Inhale through your nose while counting to 10 and expanding your abdomen. Hold the breath for one second, and exhale

through your nose on the count of 10. Inhale and exhale in this pattern five times.

2. Beginning with your head, tense your facial muscles as tightly as possible and count to five. Release the muscles completely, and sense the muscles feeling heavy and still. Work down your entire body, tensing muscle groups and then relaxing them. After the head, move to the neck, chest, arms and hands, abdomen, back, thighs and gluteals, lower legs, and feet.

3. After relaxing each set of muscles, mentally scan your body for any areas of remaining tension and ask those areas to relax completely.

4. Repeat the slow breathing exercise.

5. Gently begin to move your body to come out of the deeply relaxed state.

Try using progressive relaxation directly

before or after your sessions, directly before bed, or at any time during the day as a pick-me-up. Focus on taking full, deep, even, rhythmic breaths. With a little practice, you can become more aware of your own breathing patterns and use breathwork effectively as you move throughout your day.

*Sometimes the
cure for
restlessness is
rest*

-Colleen Wainwright

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