



“Massage For Stress and Wellness”

-By. Robin Shepard & Angee Sieckman

Massage For Stress and Wellness

The Holiday Season is one filled with joy, friends, family and food; but it can also be wrought with stress and illness. Sickness usually starts with the apparent signs of a sore throat, runny nose and general rundown feeling, while the physical effects of stress may be a little more subtle. Stress can negatively affect the body by bringing on back pain, high blood pressure and decreased immunity, which



can adversely affect the mind with anxiety and depression (“Stress symptoms: Effects on your body, feelings and behavior.” 30 Nov. 2010

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress-symptoms/SR00008_D

>). Stress builds around the holidays for many reasons: you may have a family member who makes gatherings difficult, or perhaps you aren’t able to visit with family this year. Stress can also be brought on by the added expenses of the season, parties and shopping, not to mention the physical demands of balancing work, family and a packed social calendar.

The Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research gave 10 tips for coping with this holiday-brand of stress, two that give you an excuse to treat yourself: “Don’t abandon healthy habits” and “Take a breather” (“Stress, depression and the holidays: 10 tips for coping.” Nov. 26, 2010 <<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress/MH00030>

>). Throughout the year you have made the effort to incorporate exercise and receive regular bodywork, so don’t stop during a time when your body and mind need stress reduction the most – it may even

make it easier to maintain your New Years Resolution.

Taking time can be a gift to both yourself and others, and a massage is a great way to force yourself away from the business of life. Turn off your cell phone off and spend an hour giving yourself the gift of time and reduce the level of stress. The Mayo Foundation also advises to plan ahead and allow time for the things you need to do, so make sure to call ahead and book that appointment. By scheduling your massage in advance, you are telling family, friends and your hectic agenda that your ability to make it through another holiday season relies on reducing your stress. Follow this link for all 10 Tips:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress/MH00030>



A brand new study was conducted this past year at Cedars-Sinai in Los

Angeles concerning the effects of massage on the immune system (“Adults Demonstrate Modified Immune Response After Receiving Massage, Cedars-Sinai Researchers Show.” Nov. 26, 2010 <<http://www.cedars-sinai.edu/About-Us/News/News-Releases-2010/Adults-Demonstrate-Modified-Immune-Response-After-Receiving-Massage-Cedars-Sinai-Researchers-Show.aspx>>).

In the study patients received 45-minute Swedish massages (aka Circulatory Massage at IPSB), or 45-minutes of “light touch” massage (Craniosacral Therapy or Reiki would be examples of “light touch”

massages at IPSB). Patients relaxed 30 minutes prior to their massage session, then had blood tests administered at intervals of five minutes and one minute prior to the massage, then one, five, 10, 15, 30 and 60 minutes post-massage. The blood tests were run to check the number and percentage of lymphocytes: white blood cells that are primarily responsible for immune system response in the body ("Definition of Lymphocytes." Nov. 30, 2010 <<http://medterms.com>>), as well as the amount of Arginine Vasopressin, a hormone that is involved with aggressive behavior, and Cortisol, a main stress hormone, which, in prolonged high stress situations, can lead to various health concerns such as high blood pressure and low immunity ("Cortisol and Stress: How to Stay Healthy." Nov. 30, 2010 <<http://stress.about.com/od/stresshealth/a/cortisol.htm?p=1>>). The study's results indicated that there were significant changes in the lymphocyte count of all the patients in the Swedish massage group. Also, both Arginine Vasopressin and Cortisol levels decreased in the Swedish massage group, and there were measurable changes to the immune and endocrine (hormone) systems in the body. This was the first study of its kind to actually prove that massage created a physiological change to the body, and even one single massage can help increase immunity.

In this stressful and cold-filled season we invite you to find the time to take care of yourself through bodywork. Massage can reduce the stress of the holidays while helping your body prepare to fight off sickness. Massage is also an excellent holiday gift to tell your friends and loved one that you care. Here's to a wonderful and relaxed holiday season from the IPSB MTC.

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For more information on the profession or to learn more about IPSB, call (858) 505-1100 or visit www.ipsb.edu. To book an appointment at IPSB Massage Therapy Center, call (858) 490-1154 or visit <http://tinyurl.com/ipsbmtconlinestore>