



“Thai Massage”

- By Robin Shepard & Angee Sieckman

Thai Massage

In 2008, a study commissioned by Yoga Journal found that an estimated 15.8 million people practiced Yoga in the United States (“Yoga Journal Releases 2008 “Yoga in America” Market Study.” 28 Dec 2010 < http://www.yogajournal.com/advertise/press_releases/10>). This is not unexpected seeing that there are numerous subscribed benefits to this practice: physical fitness, flexibility and the added benefits of quieting the mind through meditation. Yoga has started to be integrated into the fabric of many American’s lives and is bringing attention to the value of getting away from the everyday stresses of life through meditation and movement. There is another way, however, to discover the same meditation and movement through a style of bodywork known as Thai Massage.

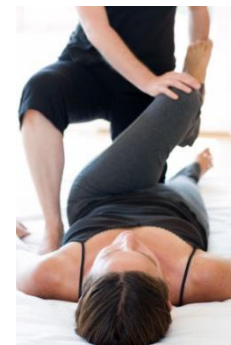


than 2500 years ago. It marries breath and movement in a unique way and is often called “passive yoga” or “Thai Yoga Massage.” The practitioner follows the breath of the client, while they manipulate the clients’ body into various yoga-like positions. Some positions are held passively

Thai Massage, like Yoga, is rooted in Ayurvedic traditions, a form of alternative medicine from India. It has descended from the “father doctor,” Jivaka Kumar Bhaccha, who was the personal physician to the Buddha more

while the practitioner gently palm presses to create a deeper stretch. Other positions explore range of motion in the joints while the practitioner creates counterforce for the stretch with their feet, knees or hands. The client remains relaxed throughout the session, and is placed in each position by the practitioner (“Thai Massage.” 26 Dec. 2010 <<http://www.altmd.com/articles/thai-massage>>).

Thai Massage, like other Asian bodywork modalities, works on the premise that there is energy running through the body along specific paths. In Thai Massage, these paths are called “Sen” lines, which run primarily from the abdomen out towards the extremities. As the abdomen is the center point of the energetic lines, abdominal work is often included in a session but is always performed according to the comfort level of the



client. By working the abdomen energy is released and the rhythmic stretching and pressing on the body distributes the energy evenly, which helps relieve pain associated with many common ailments including low back, headaches, digestion, menstruation issues and stress, to name a few (“Thai Yoga Bodywork Lotus

Palm: The Mindfulness of Touch.” 26 Dec 2010 <http://www.massagetherapy.com/articles/index.php/article_id/324/Thai-Yoga-Bodywork>). A large portion of Thai Massage focuses on the legs, which can be the root of low back, neck and hip pain (“Some Forms of Massage Help against Low-Back Pain but Not All Techniques Live up To the Promises Made for Them.” 26 Dec 2010 <<http://medicalnewstoday.com/articles/183721.php>>

). Stretching and opening the legs allows the body to find its natural alignment so clients are able to stand up straighter, and often feel taller after a session. As the practitioner focuses on the breath, the motion of Thai Massage follows that rhythm. Practitioners are trained to follow the clients' breath and often mirror that in their own body to create a symbiotic effect between the motion of the client and the motion of the practitioner. This rhythmic quality between breath and movement creates a unique meditative quality within Thai Massage sessions. This feature helps quiet the mind, relieve stress, and create deep relaxation. Surprisingly, this does not leave the client in a foggy state-of-mind that comes from receiving a traditional Swedish massage; it actually leaves the mind clear and focused, allowing the client to walk away from a session ready to progress through their day or to relax into their evening. Unlike many western massage modalities, Traditional Thai Massage is done on a mat placed on the floor. Receiving bodywork on the mat actually increases the grounding in the receiver's body, getting them more in touch with the natural rhythms of the earth. Thai Massage has been adapted to the massage table as well and can be found at many massage clinics and spas in this form. Additionally, the receiver should wear work-out or loose fitting attire that will

and open the body and mind in many unique ways. Why not try a session and experience the benefits of yoga without the effort?



About the Authors: Robin Shepard, BA, CMT, HHP, RYT. Robin attended Point Park University graduating Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelors Degree in both Dance and Psychology. After college, Robin landed in San Diego where she started searching for her next path in life. In 2007 Robin graduated from the Massage Therapist program at IPSB College. She specialized in Traditional Thai Massage and travelled to Thailand in both 2008 and 2010 to expand her studies. In addition, Robin primarily the Spring Quarter Table Thai Class and assists in Thai Massage Classes at IPSB College. Thai Massage has inspired her to also obtain her to become a Certified Yoga Instructor with Yoga Alliance.

Angee Sieckman, BA, MT, has a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism from Point Loma Nazarene University. She began her journey with IPSB in 2007, and by 2009 stepped into the role of Assistant Manager for the IPSB's Massage Therapy Center. She has a small but rewarding private practice, where she combines Circulatory, Deep Tissue, Tui Na and Thai massage to customize each session.



provide comfort as well as full range of motion. Depending on where you visit, you may be asked to come wearing your own comfortable clothes, although some spas may provide an outfit for you.

Thai Massage can be a great compliment to yoga or any other form of physical activity. It will balance