



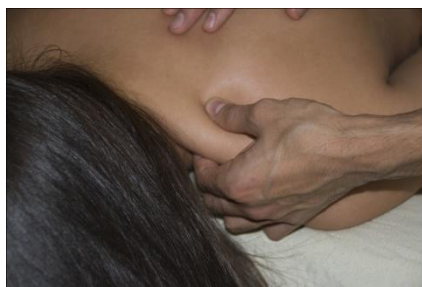
Defining the Roll of Communication

-By: Rhonda Grace Sandhu

Defining the Roll of Communication

There are many modalities and techniques from which to choose in the multi-cultural world of massage and bodywork. The one thing all massage has in common is the client intake interview with the therapist. A very important aspect of the intake interview is getting to know the client's needs so the massage can be tailored specifically to that individual, and ultimately to meet those requests. With communication playing a key role in receiving a massage, the question is: how does communication relate during the massage?

This is where the definition of 'communication in massage therapy' can change; because of the modalities received, as well as the client's preferences. Some massage modalities require more client feedback during the session to meet session goals. The amount of communication can also vary from session to session, depending upon the client's desires or lack of to communicate. Both client and therapist can expect different experiences from one massage to the next, depending on the needs of that day and the type of massage performed.



sensations during the session in order to have the desired effects of pain relief. ("Massage Techniques That

For example, Neuromuscular Therapy is a style of massage that requires the client to communication regarding trigger points and referred

Use Firm Touch." 12 May, 2010

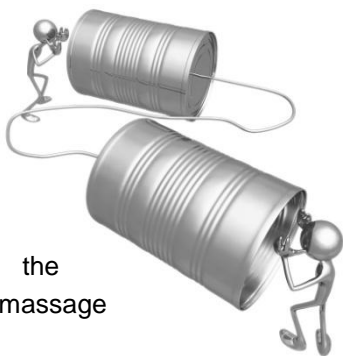
<http://www.suite101.com/content/massage-techniques-the-use-firm-touch-a236399>) In the case of Circulatory or Swedish massage, there is not as much of a need to communicate consistently as the intention is to bring complete relaxation. This is not a rule; however, as a therapist may find that a client prefers more feedback during the massage. In both of these cases, a therapist will need to rely on direct communication from the client. A client should never feel timid to ask his or her therapist questions or request a change in the work they are doing, even mid-session. Sometimes an understanding of a session goal has been made during the intake process, but once the session starts, the needs can change. In this case, clear client and therapist dialogue is essential to make the needed changes. In any scenario, it is important that a client feels comfortable communicating with his or her practitioner before, during and after a massage.



The intake interview process between therapist and client is one of the most valuable aspects of the massage. Maximizing the efforts to communicate in the intake interview can make all the difference in the outcome of the massage session for both the client and practitioner. From the therapist's perspective the client's health concerns and needs and wishes for the session can determine everything from the type of work they perform, to changes they need to make to the table configuration

or products to use. The ultimate goal is that the client gets the most out of his or her massage session and has the best possible outcome - complete satisfaction. This also allows the therapist to create a rapport and a comfortable environment to set the stage for the relaxation and trust that is needed when working on tense areas.

From the client's perspective, the intake it is the time to describe the details of the results they are seeking from the massage and goals for longer term treatments. Even if a client has worked with the same therapist from year-to-year the needs of the client can constantly change, which makes the intake useful. The same idea applies to current health concerns and the need to update the therapist with this valuable information before each massage. These opportunities for communications lay the foundation for a great massage experience.



The massage therapy industry holds a great deal of importance on raising awareness in client communication, as it is a cornerstone to building a strong foundation to work upon. ("Massage Communication Taught At Special Training Course." 30 Oct., 2006 <<http://www.syl.com/hb/massagecommunicationisessentialbothforclientand-therapist.html>>) Many therapists are trained to pay special attention to non-verbal communications in addition to verbal, to help them make the most out of their client interactions and massage sessions. For example, a therapist may see the client have a physical reaction to a technique and need to check in verbally to understand how to adapt the work during a massage. At the same time, a client may have the desire to keep quiet for maximum enjoyment in their session. In all cases, it is clear to see that communication is the foundation that will define the best session for the client and outline clear goals for the practitioner. The option for those goals to change during a session is always an acceptable choice.

Seeing that there are many modalities from which to choose, it is understandable how questions may come up. Creating and keeping a good therapist and client relationship starts with effective communication and ends with a great massage experience.

Recommended topics to communicate with your massage therapist:

1. Goal for the massage?
2. Goal for long term treatment?
3. Desired level for checking in?
4. Communication style with modality chosen?

About the Author: Rhonda Grace Sandhu teaches Neuromuscular Therapy and Client Centered Communications at the International Professional School of Bodywork. She is also available as the Assistant Manager at the I.P.S.B. Massage Therapy Center.