

# BENEFITS OF MASSAGE THERAPY FOR SELF-CARE

## 3 Ways Massage Can Impact Your Self-Care

Stress, anxiety, and pain can dramatically restrict anyone's lifestyle and negatively affect their overall health. Take care of yourself. Research on the benefits of massage therapy gives strong evidence for including massage as part of an approach to staving off pain and relieving stress and anxiety.



### Stress

Anyone who has ever had a massage to relax knows its effect, but research shines a light on the science behind what takes place during massage. For more than 20 years, studies have shown some of the positive effects of massage therapy for relaxation. In a study on the effect of trigger point therapy<sup>1</sup>, there was a significant decrease in heart rate, systolic blood pressure<sup>8</sup>, and diastolic blood pressure<sup>8</sup>. Measures of oxygen consumption, blood pressure, and salivary cortisol levels were all lower after a 10 to 15 minute chair massage in controlled studies.<sup>2, 3, 4</sup> Changes in psychological states have been measured by physiological responses<sup>1, 3</sup>, the Perceived Stress Scale<sup>5, 6</sup>, the POMS Depression Scale<sup>4, 5</sup>, and the Anxiety State Scale.<sup>4</sup>

### Anxiety

Research continues to document the impact for relief of anxiety and depression for people in a wide range of health situations.<sup>8, 9, 10, 11</sup> For example, one randomized study found women with stage 1 and stage 2 breast cancer benefited from regular massage therapy sessions. The immediate massage benefits included reduced anxiety, depressed mood and anger, while the long-term impact reduced depression and increased serotonin values. Serotonin, a neurotransmitter with functions in various parts of the body, works to regulate mood, appetite, sleep, memory and learning.

### Pain

From the muscle strain and soreness when you overdo it to serious or chronic pain, massage therapy is showing positive results. Consumers are learning its value, as 41 percent of American adults who had a massage in the past five years indicate they sought it for pain relief.<sup>12</sup>

A meta-analysis of research on massage therapy for pain conducted by Samueli Institute in 2016 concluded that massage therapy should be strongly recommended for pain management. The analysis reviewed 67 published studies on the impact of massage therapy on pain.<sup>13</sup>

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