

Protecting your HANDS and BODY

!!! **PRESSURE** !!!

Practitioner
applying
pressure
(downward)



Newton's third law of motion:

"For every action,
there's an equal and opposite reaction"

Pressure up through
practitioner's hands,
arms and shoulders

45 minutes of pressure (1 massage) = 5 mins, pushing small car
4-5 Massages = 20-30 mins of pressure

CUMULATIVE Strains (outside of consciousness)

Burn-out (& damage body) - too many clients in row, no breaks → Retire hurt

Pace yourself (marathon, not 100 metre dash) - sustain career

You are a **Massage ATHLETE**

so **WARM UP** (even 3 mins)

(Body flexible, energised, 'tuned up' and physically ready for action, embodied)

Feet/ankles, hips (knees), trunk, shoulders, hands

STRAIN, ACHES and PAIN

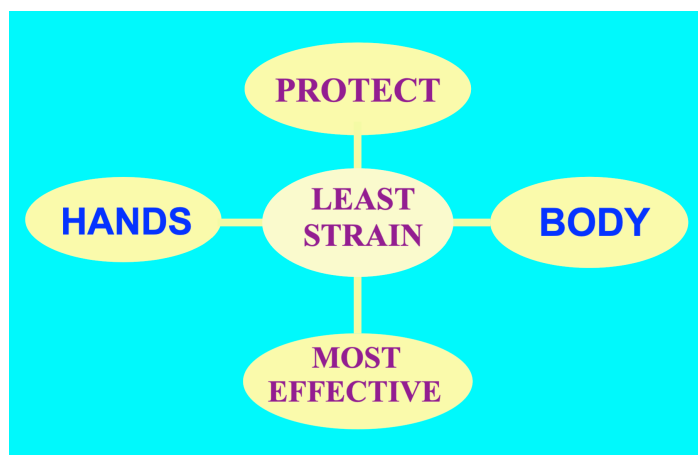
Doing a single massage (even badly) won't cause a problem - it's the slow accumulation of strain over time from doing the same techniques in the same way that's the problem.

(These strains often develop outside of our awareness)

The sequence of strain developing:

- 1) feeling strain **DURING** massage sessions
- 2) feeling strain **AFTER** massage sessions
- 3) Recurring or **LINGERING ACHES** or **PAINS**
- 4) **WAKING** in the night with **ACHES** or **PAIN**
- 5) **PERMANENT** strain

If you feel strains developing - take them as early warnings and change the way that you work.



Commonest problem areas

**THUMB/S
WRIST/S**

**SHOULDERS
Back, especially LOWER
BACK**

Looking after yourself

Get **COACHING** from a teacher/practitioner who can watch you in action and make suggestions about your way of working

SPREAD THE BOOKINGS of your most demanding clients throughout your working week

PACING yourself - in each session, in your working day/week

REDUCE YOUR WORKLOAD when you need to take it easier - after injuries, when you're going through stressful times

REFER on clients who need a stronger massage than you can **COMFORTABLY** deliver

No matter how good bodyuse, if client too big/demands too much = **refer on**
(Bodyweight limit - burn out/not deliver satisfactorily for client).

Other elements of looking after yourself

Supervision (professionally led, peer get-together, coffee share)

Swaps (with mates, peers; other professionals)

Time off (special days off; mini-breaks; holidays)

Fresh input (training; regular get-togethers; conferences)

LIMITS

Everyone has **limits** - depending on your build and your clients' needs.

If you wear yourself out doing massage, or strain or damage your hands - your clients lose their favourite massage person, you lose your livelihood and can become debilitated in everyday tasks.

VAK - Visual Auditory Kinaesthetic

SEE HEAR EXPERIENCE

(not just “because teacher says”)

Visual Watch demonstration by tutor (including good/bad practices)
Language (offer and ask for images, short-hand phrases for ideas presented)
 V-K images (e.g. act out contrasting ‘cartoon-ish’ good and bad images
 - exaggerated to show how ludicrous, unhelpful, inefficient etc)
 Tutor does bad practice OR ask students to do - group calls out what they see

Auditory

Shorthand names for practical concepts, principles (your & class suggestions, incl jokes)
 Hearing names / talking about them (ways for students to ‘own’ them)
 Discussion

Kinaesthetic Contrast poor/good practice - can they FEEL the difference?
 (Good practice can be subtle/harder to feel. Poor practice, esp exaggerated, easier to feel)
 If they can’t distinguish - get them to exaggerate until can feel diff (or try another way)
 Relaxation is ‘absence’ of feeling - so tense-relax helps learn

(VARK - R = reading/writing -

Journal/notes to self (e.g. post-it/postcard to self/partner to summarise session); OR
 put in group box, with name on - end of session find named person, get them to describe)

Some other ways of defining learning styles (mix them all in together)

Active (doing - esp bodyuse ex, in pairs to feel both sides = doing and receiving/effect)

Reflection, (solo, and with others)

Social (doing together/discussing - e.g. in pairs, or in group; throwing thoughts/images/
 phrases etc ‘into the tub’)

Analytical (give ‘reasons’ - in this case, by both showing extreme versions of good/bad,
 and by guided experience and tutor articulating the relevant points)

Experience practice few times poor to good - to be able to notice & find way back

Give people EXPERIENCE

DEMONSTRATE and COACH

In **demonstration** - show difference between good and bad practice
 (including demo exaggerated bad practice - to make look ridiculous).

Coach students to do **good and bad** practices

If necessary, get them to **exaggerate difference** between to clarify,
 AND how **subtly** can they move **between** two to clarify for future

Tutor states: “If this (poor) action doesn’t apply for you, don’t worry about it;
 but, if it resonates, make a **mental note** to **monitor/notice** for yourself in future.”

Need to learn to **regularly self-monitor** (as well as attend to client),
 (part of every technique is how you deliver it)
 self-monitor **during** and **after** treatment sessions.

Developing self-monitoring

1. For each technique

during the massage (i.e. moment-by-moment)

Part of each technique is *how you deliver it*

2. Divide attention between self and client

At first, when focus on self, will forget client (and vice versa)

Practice moving attention between (gradually faster)

Ideal - look both ways at once ("50-50" focus - Andy Fagg)

3. Quick self-scan after session

Any new pains/strains/stiffness? Any ideas why?

What to watch for in future sessions (whether cause clear or not)

Practitioner's build

Small build/short practitioner

Focus on pushing, don't try to reach too far

Table even lower (to reach over large clients)

Slender/hypermobility hands

Be careful of hands, wrists - esp hyperextending with pressure

Do pressure work sparingly

Build wrist (muscle) strength with personal trainer

Use hands together whenever possible

(learn Hands Free Massage)

Tall practitioner

Use long reach - more pulling strokes

(pressure strokes harder than for short client)

Get hips moving with upper trunk (often less familiar),

- rather than stand still and overreach or twist flexible trunk

(= less powerful delivery, potential back strain)

Looking after your hands

1. Stop doing techniques that cause you

discomfort strain pain

2. Use the largest appropriate area of your hands

3. Vary how you use your hands

4. Use both hands together whenever you can

5. Massage is hand-intensive

Monitor how much you use your hands in the rest of your life

(Learn Hands Free Massage - after experience using hands)

Looking after your thumbs

1. Don't hyperextend when applying pressure
2. 'Reinforced thumb'; 'supported thumb'
3. Save your thumbs whenever you can
 - use bigger parts of hands/learn to work hands-free

Looking after your Wrist

1. Don't bend wrist back when applying pressure
2. Don't bend wrist in other directions
 - when applying pressure (forward or sideways)
3. Support wrist to keep it relatively straight
 - (support around wrist, OR support on client's body - better stability)
4. Don't turn, twist or bend wrist when applying pressure
 - (keep wrist at same angle and move body)

Looking after your Fingers

1. Don't bend back when applying pressure (slightly flex them)
2. Support with other hand (across fingers)
3. Reduce one-handed squeeze-and-release techniques
 - (tempting but tiring) *Instead: **Two hands:** 'Grab' & stretch OR pull with 'hooked' hand*
 - (Use larger areas - e.g. 'reinforced thumb', knuckles, fist)

Looking after your 'Knuckles' when applying pressure

1. Use all knuckles together (not separately)
2. Support with other hand (best support - resting on client's body)
3. Turn whole hand/arm to move/change direction
 - (not just turn/twist knuckles)
 - (Use larger areas - e.g. fist)

Looking after your fist

M-P joints - press down & slide **Slide of fist - slide along**

1. **Don't let wrist bend too much** (back, sideways, forward)
2. **Support with other hand**
(best support - resting on client's body)
3. **Don't roll, twist or turn fist when pressing down**
(turn whole arm, and body)
(use larger areas - e.g. Hands-Free, if you're trained)

Using your body effectively to support your hands when delivering pressure

1. **Get behind your hands to deliver pressure**
2. **Lean forward for power**
3. **Sway for the power and fluidity of your strokes**

Movement - exercises

1. Moving with separate strokes

Focusing one type of stroke (away from table/on partner on table)
Then focus on the movement for another stroke

Note: Get people to exaggerate movements, until moving becomes internalised as a 'natural' part of each technique

2. Join together

Get people to practice moving from one to another type of stroke, first structured sequencing a few times
(e.g. same stroke along/across table; long slide into wringing, etc)
away from table - then with partner on table (*with music?*)

3. 'Dance'

Then 'free' sequencing

(*Self-monitor* 'Are your hips/lower body describing or, at least, initiating the strokes; leaning in for pressure; swaying back for pull)

Shoulder problems

1. **Table too high?**
2. **Stand still, don't move body** (rely on shoulder muscle power)
3. **Tense up to deliver pressure**
4. **Shoulder joint - twist arm when applying pressure**

Save your back

1. Lean for pressure
2. Sway for sliding
3. Tense up to deliver pressure
4. Hip spotlight (“hara spotlight”)

Hip spotlight (‘hara’ spotlight) to get power from body behind hands

1. Push partner (sweep spotlight across)
2. Lean, both hands on table (sweep spotlight side-to-side)
3. Hands on table
(face toward hands from different positions/directions
to feel direction of power for hands (either to slide or to press))

Moving high and low

1. Get above to deliver more pressure (downward)
2. Get lower to slide forward more,
deliver pressure closer to table height

‘Positional intelligence’ - exercises

1. Facing hands for pressure (‘hip/‘hara spotlight’)

Change position and face hands: Hands on table/on partner on table, move to face different directions to change direction of effect

2. Reaching across table

Solo/ partner on table: push and pull across far side of client’s back (if arms long enough to reach; if not, don’t even try)

Note: If you try to reach too far over, or lean too far = back discomfort AND try press down on far side (feel how awkward, back discomfort)

3. Trying to press on client’s shoulders from side of table

Feel how awkward, compared to stand at head of table,

BUT - good position for pulling back client’s shoulders

(good leverage on opposite shoulder, if your arms are long enough; if not - do on close-side shoulder).

Working positions

1. **Lunge stance - one foot forward/one back**
(‘walk-standing’, ‘archer’ stance)
2. **Horse stance - feet alongside each other**
(‘wide stance’, warrior stance’)
3. **Massage ‘dance’ - moving** (not standing stiffly in one place)

Lunge stance

one foot forward/one back
(‘walk-standing’, ‘archer’ stance)

1. **Lean for pressure**
(not stand still - tense shoulders for pressure)
2. **Sway forward and back for sliding**
3. **Which foot to have in front** (outside foot)
4. **Mirror when cross to other side of table**
5. **Angle of back foot** (not turned away)

Lunge stance - exercises

1. Lean for pressure

PAIRS: stand side-by-side - **push hips** mutually sideways (power from legs)

‘Dunks’ - Side-ways lean (power from leaning)

Side-on push: One stands side-on, pushes partner (shoulders) with hands (constant angle and length in trunk; bend knees to lean/sway forward)
(not hunch over/ not stand up too straight/ not tense/ use shoulders only)

2. Sway forward and back for siding

Solo: standing - stroke down own leg (both hands)

Pairs: ‘push me-pull you’ dance (*if covid-safe*) - sway forward and back
hands on partner’s shoulders - facing, both same foot forward

Note: Get people to exaggerate movements, until moving becomes internalised as a ‘natural’ part of each technique

3. Don’t overreach

Demo: Compare - stand still/sway/ try to reach beyond comfortable range

Solo: work along table (deliberately overreach to feel back discomfort)

How to step forward (‘waltz’ step, back foot; then step front foot forward)

Horse stance - exercises

1. Twist hips (wringing)

PAIRS: stand behind partner - **push alternate hips** forward (twist)

Front person - compare when partner keeps own hips still as push/
twists hips as they push

2. Sway to one side then other

PAIRS: back to back - arms entwined

compare swaying hands side-to-side, keep hips still/hips sway

3. Hands push apart

Compare - Stand still, slide hands apart/'fall' forward to push hands apart

Focussed pressure - exercises

Avoid tensing up

'Solo': (on partner on table - clothed is fine)

1) deliberate tense, hunch over to see,

contrast - relax (relatively), and breath out as apply pressure

2) Apply focussed pressure with hand/s,
maintain as move body