

**The Learning Company  
Communications and Ethics**

**Communication needs in Massage Therapy**

**CLIENT EXPECTATIONS**

- Clear instructions, expectations, outcomes
- Design the treatment in consultation with the client

“Why have you come for a massage?”

“How do you wish to feel after the massage?”

“What do you feel massage will do for you?”

“What results do you expect from the massage treatment?”

- Client needs to understand difference between client outcomes vs. client expectations
- Clear communication is critical to support client in developing trust and obtaining valid consent; use lay person terminology

The massage therapist needs to educate the client and ensure a clear understanding that massage therapy has the effect of increasing general well being and efficient body function.

It is very informative to ask the client.

“What do you think massage is like?”

“Describe to me how a massage would be done?”

If the client has never had a massage before expectations will be determined by what has been heard, read, observed.

- Styles vary the differences between what is expected and what is received may be confusing
- Massage therapist therefore needs to clearly explain the approach used and the treatment sequence.
- Client may compare to other massage experience.
- Need to explain there are many ways to do massage.

Unethical to say your way is better or discount another therapists methods. Unless treatment was in violation of professional standards and ethics.

**OFF THE TABLE**

If the client needs help in dressing allow them to do as much as possible and be very matter-of-fact and deliberate with any assistance.

If the client is left to get off the table alone, REMIND THEM:

- 1) Roll to one side

- 2) Use the arms to push to a seated position
- 3) Sit up a minute before getting up
- 4) Leave the sheets on the table
- 5) Get dressed and return to the business area

**POINTS OF BUSINESS:**

- When client is dressed and ready to leave make the next appointment or provide a reminder if one is already made.
- Collect fee if not done in advance.
- Attitude in business area is of polite and courteous completion.

**POINTS OF BUSINESS AFTER MASSGE:**

- Do not linger in conversation
- It is often difficult to get a client to leave after having spent an extended time in a comfortable and caring environment they may want to talk, not go home to trouble, be alone, etc....
- It is best to establish a departure routine and be consistent
- People respond well to sameness
- Client will have a much easier time leaving and making the break from the MT if the sequence is always the same.

(eg. Client approaches the desk; MT takes the money, writes a receipt, confirms the next appointment. MT gets up from the desk and escorts client to the door saying...

*“I really enjoyed working with you today. I am glad that you continue to feel that the massage is beneficial. It will be nice to see you again in two weeks. Remember to do the stretches we talked about, please keep track of any changes, and we will discuss them next time I see you.”*

- The therapist may extend a warm handshake, a quick friendly hug may be extended and received ONLY if initiated by the client.
- Hugs or physical contact are professionally respectfully accepted.
- Say good-bye gesturing/looking toward the door and indicate your intention to leave the area before further conversation is initiated.

Prepare self and room for next client.

## **COMMUNICATING**

- It is helpful if the therapist's wording is as non-judgmental as possible. i.e. describing a limb as "unaffected" or "affected", "injured" or "uninjured" avoids the judgmental terms "good leg" or "bad leg".
- Each person has his or her own beliefs and opinions.
- In the interest of promoting clearer client communication the therapist should keep responses neutral when reviewing case history info i.e. a client reports that she is pregnant and the therapist replies "Oh that's wonderful", however this may not be true for the client.
- The therapist's statement may cause the client to feel silenced or upsetting her flow of information may cease. If the therapist responds "How do you feel about that?" the client can voice her opinions more freely.
- Therapists must be aware that the client may feel vulnerable disclosing information about his or her health history.
- The information should be treated respectfully. It is also important to remember that law protects the confidentiality of clients written records and verbal information.
- During the treatment the therapist should strive to achieve a balance between continuous conversation total silence that is most comfortable for the client and the therapist.
- It is important that the client communicate with the therapist about the massage.
- However being too involved in a conversation can shift the therapist's concentration from the work, leading to ineffective results.
- Remember to keep conversation topics light (religion, money and politics are avoidable topics due to the fact of strong personal opinions)

## **COMMUNICATION – PAIN TOLERANCE**

- To establish a client's pain tolerance and his or her perception of the pressure, use a one-to-ten pain scale to monitor the pain.
- The client is instructed to tell the therapist if the pain approaches a seven on a scale where one equals no pain and ten equals extreme pain, at which point the therapist maintains or decreases the pressure until it is comfortable for the client.
- If you are using too much pressure the client will be bracing themselves and/or clenching their teeth to endure the pain.
- Ten is an undesirable level of pain and pressure (for most people) and the client need not suffer through this depth of work.
- As an alternative the client may signal too much pressure by raising their hand, or "tapping out."
- This approach allows for the wide variances in individual client perceptions of pain and builds a client trust in the therapist's work.

### **Communicating Treatment Plan**

- The client is briefly given the rationale or reasoning for the proposed treatment plan.
- Together the client and therapist choose the focus and the frequency of the treatments.

- The client has a choice in either accepting or rejecting the proposed treatment (or parts of it).
- This can be done before or during the treatment or from one treatment to another.
- The therapist must obtain the clients consent for the entire treatment plan.
- This complete statement need not be repeated before each treatment begins.
- Client's consent is required if a change to the original plan is necessary.
- The therapist may summarize general consent statement by asking if the previous treatment approach is still acceptable and adding the details of any changes that may be necessary for today's plan.
- If planned treatment includes work to body parts that are deemed more "sensitive", this should be mentioned to the client prior to the beginning of the treatment, thus allowing the client to refuse if they wish no treatment to these areas.(Examples of sensitive areas; anterior neck, chest or abdomen, upper and medial thigh, gluteals, pelvic region in general.)

### **INTERVIEWING**

- When a client provides info, it is important to restate the info so the client has the opportunity to correct any information and be assured the therapist is listening.
- Use words the client can understand.
- Ask for clarification to enhance knowledge and understanding of the info obtained.

### **NEUTRAL VOICE**

- Neutral voice means asking a question or phrasing a statement in words that are as neutral as possible in content, meaning and tone.