Therapist Self Care

4. Bio burnout

Self Care for a Therapist

Keeping the body as relaxed as possible while working

Do not strain or torque to reach over a client's body

Use biomechanically sound positions during massage

Therapist should use his/her body weight as leverage, rather than just arm strength

Remember to breathe while working (proper breathing techniques enhances our mental and physical health)

After treatment therapist should stretch and use hydrotherapy when needed

Therapist is recommended to receive massage treatments that focus on the forearms, pectoral regions and rotator cuff muscles

Therapist should have their own therapist for tissue maintenance and well being

Therapist should live a relatively healthy lifestyle with regular exercise and good eating habits

Strength training is a good way to keep a therapist healthy (because massage involves the whole body, all major muscle groups should be addressed in strength training)

Cardiovascular training is also beneficial because most massages last 1 hour. A therapist must have the stamina and endurance for clients all day

Rest is very important (being tired leads to improper body mechanics)

Biomechanics

The proper use of postural techniques to deliver massage therapy with the utmost efficiency and least amount of trauma to the therapist

Proper biomechanics influence the execution of the massage

Decreases fatigue and discomfort during and after a treatment

Helps prevent repetitive motion injuries

Key to a long career in massage therapy is the ability to provide treatment without incurring injury

Incorrect working posture and poorly executed hand techniques can increase stress on the joints and create repetitive strain injuries

Guidelines for proper body mechanics ...

- Check the table height – proper table height allows you to use your weight rather than your strength to increase pressure
- Wear comfortable attire – supportive shoes and clothing that allows freedom of movement and still appear professional
- Warm up before massage – stretching
- Use a variety of strokes – changing techniques allows the therapist to change positions thus reducing fatigue and chance of repetitive strain injury
- Get behind your work – position yourself right behind your work, both arms and legs should face the direction of work area
- Check in with low back, hip and knees – keep your back straight by tilting your pelvis, hips should be level and knees slightly bent with feet flat on the floor
- Position shoulders arms and wrists – shoulders should be relaxed and dropped, upper arms should be close to the body
- Keeps wrists as straight as possible – no torquing
- Do not let fingers become hyperextended when applying pressure
- Align your spine – keep back straight, avoid forward head posture, lower yourself when needed instead of bending at the waist (knee or use a stool)
- Stretch – take time to stretch out neck when working, look to the ceiling and side to side
- Breathe – deep breathing aids in relaxation
- Move smoothly – keep movements smooth and flowing
- Lift correctly – if you have to lift during a treatment, make sure that the heaviest part is close to you, use your legs not your back, know your own limits

Burnout

Being tired of or unhappy with one's work

Symptoms of burnout can include disinterest in the job, dreading your next client, boredom, restlessness, inability to remain focused, fatigue, outright hatred of a job

Burn out can include depression, lack of productivity, increased tardiness, increased absenteeism, decline of social skills, decline in professional boundaries

Burnout affects people for different reasons

Many massage therapists are entrepreneurs and are highly motivated, hard working people

Many self employed people have difficulty setting limits on their professional time

Self employment can lead to being overworked

Not setting and maintaining personal limits for yourself or your time may lead to early burnout

Preventing professional burnout can be done by taking steps to ensure our own wellness

Stress Management

- Stress Diary - Identifying the short-term stress in your life
- Job Analysis - The first step in managing work overload and job stress
- Performance Planning - Planning ahead to reduce performance stress
- Imagery - Mental stress management
- Physical Relaxation Techniques - Deep breathing, relaxation response
- Thought Awareness, Rational Thinking and Positive Thinking
- Anger Management - Channeling anger productively
- Burnout Self-Test - Testing yourself for burnout
- Building Self-Confidence - Developing the self-confidence you deserve
- Exercise - Regular exercise is one of the best ways to manage stress, walking is a great way to get started
- Write - It can help to write about the things that are bothering you
- Let your feelings out -Talk, laugh, cry, and express anger when you need to
- Do something you enjoy -A hobby can help you relax. Volunteer work or work that helps others can be a great stress reliever.
- Learn ways to relax your body -This can include breathing exercises, muscle relaxation exercises, massage, aromatherapy, yoga, or relaxing exercises like tai chi
- Focus on the present -Try meditation, imagery exercises, or self-hypnosis. Listen to relaxing music.
- Try to look for the humour in life -Laughter really can be the best medicine.

Responding to Stress

The human response to stress is complex and multidimensional. Stress affects people at several levels: emotional, physiological and behavioral.

Emotional responses

Are powerful, largely uncontrollable feelings, accompanied by physiological changes

The common emotions elicited are annoyance (anger, rage) apprehension (anxiety, fear) and dejection (sadness, grief). Other emotions include guilt, shame, envy, jealousy and disgust.

Even unpleasant emotions serve as a warning that one need to take action.

They can interfere with efforts to cope with stress.

High emotional arousal can interfere with attention and memory retrieval and can impair judgment and decision making.

Physiological responses

Even in cases of moderate stress, heart and breathing rate may increase.

This is due to the “fight-or-flight” response.

This response is a physical reaction to a threat and it will mobilize an organism to attack (fight) or flee (flight) an enemy.

The fight-or-flight response is mainly under the direction of the endocrine and autonomic nervous systems.

When a threat is perceived then a variety of physical responses take place.

Summary

Eyes	Pupils dilate
Skin	Goose bumps
Mouth	Dry
Palms	Sweaty
Lungs	Passages dilate
Heart	Rate increases
Blood Flow	Supply diverted to muscles
Adrenal glands	Increased activity
Digestion	Inhibited

The fight or flight theory can be expanded to include the General Adaptation Syndrome (G.A.S.)

The first phase is the alarm reaction when a person recognizes the existence of a threat. Physiological arousal increases as the body musters its resources to combat the challenge.

The second stage is resistance. This occurs if the stress is not removed or resolved. During this phase physiological changes stabilize as coping efforts get under way. Typically, physical arousal continues to be higher than normal, although it may level off somewhat as the person becomes accustomed to the threat.

The third stage is call exhaustion. The body's resources for fighting stress are limited. If the stress cannot be overcome the body's resources may be depleted. During this phase resistance declines, potentially leading to what is termed the diseases of adaptation such as ulcers or high blood pressure.

Behavioral Responses

Negative responses would include lashing out at others or blaming one’s self.

Positive responses would be to seek help, problem solve or release emotions.

Dealing effectively with stress at the behavioral level can shut down potentially harmful emotional and physiological responses.

This involves coping and refers to active efforts to master, reduce or tolerate the demands created by stress.

Potential Effects of Stress

1) Impaired task performance

- this may be due to pressure to perform

2) Disruptive thinking patterns

- jumping to conclusions
- poor organization
- decreased attention span

3) Burnout - exhaustion that is attributed to work-related stress

- physical
- mental
- emotional

4) Delayed effects

- Post traumatic stress syndrome - involves disturbed behavior that emerges sometime after a major stressful event is over.
- Common symptoms include nightmares, paranoia, emotional numbing, guilt about surviving, alienation, and problems in social relations, elevated risk for substance abuse, depression and suicide attempts.

5) Psychological problems and disorders

- ranging from mild (insomnia) to severe (eating disorders)

6) Physical illness

- high blood pressure
- ulcers
- asthma
- skin disorders
- migraine and tension headaches
- It may influence the onset and course of more severe diseases such as heart disease, stroke, multiple sclerosis, diabetes and other infectious diseases.

7) Beneficial effects

- These tend to be more subtle but include satisfying our need for stimulation and challenge.
- Although overload can be unpleasant so can under load (boredom)
- Stress can promote personal growth or self-improvement (ie. development of new skills) and it inoculates people so that they are less affected by tomorrow’s stress.

Self care and biomechanics

General rules of Body Mechanics

1. Body alignment is good when

   a. Feet are in a wide base of support
   b. Arms generating the downward pressure should be opposite the back weight bearing leg.

2. Weight is kept on the back leg and foot

   a. Client's body is in front of you
   b. Front non-weight bearing leg is used to modulate pressure levels and provide some stability

3. Stay behind your stroke

4. Wrists and hands always relaxed

5. Avoid using fingers and thumbs individually, work with the hand as a unit

6. Do not use your triceps as it can damage the ulnar nerve, use forearm just below elbow

7. Position client to enable therapist to lean to protect the low back

8. Do not reach for the stroke, keep client close

9. Never hyperextend the wrists or knees,

   a. Weight bearing knee will move into normal knee-lock , not hyper extension
   b. Wrist angle is no more than 110 degrees avoiding compression

10. Change position / method often

   - Avoid twisting – face your work. Develop your style to support comfort and safety.