

Touch Therapy for Off-Site Internship Level 3

Hand massage is a simple, safe, and acceptable approach to a wide range of recipients. The hand is a natural part of the body to touch and would be acceptable to most people. It could be used between sexes comfortably. The hand is accessible from almost every position, an important consideration if clients are bed ridden.

Massaging the hand can be stimulating enough to create a change, yet will avoid overstimulation to blood and lymph flow, sometimes contraindicated in cases of inflammation or disease. Hand massage can consist of general stroking (a Western approach) as well as stimulation of specific points on the fingertips and palm (an Eastern approach).

From a Western point of view, the fingers, due to their complexity, occupy a relatively large area of the cerebral cortex in the brain. Each finger has its own corresponding receptor in the cerebral cortex. The thumb occupies a slightly larger area, being the digit with the most muscles. As you touch or exercise the fingers you will stimulate the corresponding areas of the brain.

From an Eastern point of view, in general, all of the fingertip points revive consciousness, help the ears and eyes, and benefit the tongue. They are said to “calm the spirit,” helping to clear “vexation” or “clouding inversion” which the Chinese described as “clouding of consciousness in introverted patterns” (Boss, pg. 452). The thumb, according to tradition, contains points which can calm the spirit, alleviate anxiety and relieve pain.

The points listed below have been chosen based on the principles of Classical Chinese Medicine and are said to have a beneficial effect on the hands and the upper body, in particular the chest and head.

- **LI 4:** (In the fleshy area on the hand between the thumb and the index finger - do not use this point on anyone who is pregnant or thinks she might be pregnant.) **Benefits:** Alleviates pain, a rigid spine, tongue stiffness and atrophy. Regulates the large intestine. Opens and brightens the eyes. Clears the nose. Quiets the spirit. It is generally taught as a general wellness point and a point for any problem with the upper body (i.e.: headache, first sign of a cold, stuffy nose).
- **SI 3:** (On the side of the hand at the base of the knuckle under the pinky.) **Benefits:** It's associated with releasing upper back and neck stiffness. Is indicated for “dream disturbed sleep” and for “clearing the brain.” It is said to relax the muscles, benefit the joints and relieve pain, especially in the upper back and neck.
- **TE 4:** (In the depression at base of wrist crease on the back of the hand at junction of ulna and carpal bones.) **Benefits:** Relaxes muscles and increases energy. Use “in all chronic disease when the kidneys have become deficient and the person’s energy is greatly weakened.” (Macioci, pg. 439)
- **TE 5:** (On the posterior forearm 3 inches or 3 finger widths above TE4 between the ulna and radius.) **Benefits:** Said to relax muscles and relieve pain.

If you look at the hand energetically, you begin to understand why it feels so good to hold hands with someone you love, why a parent's loving touch is so comforting, and even why a baby sucks its thumb.

It's important to remember that working on the points is not a mechanical effect, it's not like pushing a button. The effects will always be individual and involve a relationship that the receiver has with himself, with the giver, and with his own stage in life.

You might think of the point as a doorway. What will you do at the doorway to get it open, to release the stored tension? Will you wait quietly? Will you bang on the door? Shout? Force your way in? What really matters is your ability to focus.

Being is something that goes along with silence, while doing is associated with the word-built world. There are older life systems. This wisdom is already in you. Learn to recognize it, trust it as you trust yourself, and refine it over time with practice.

THINGS TO REMEMBER when applying Touch Therapy

Talk to the receiver by name and explain what you are going to do. Explain that you will be touching only the arms and hands in a gentle way.

Make eye contact if possible.

Be aware of your own body posture and breathing patterns. Remember, your fingers will do the "talking" so the more at ease you feel, the more you will communicate comfort.

Work slowly and gently; allow plenty of time for a response from the receiver.

You do not have to do the whole sequence and you can start at any point in the sequence; feel free to adapt the procedure in whatever way you need to best suit the receiver.

Pay attention to signs of pleasure/acceptance (i.e.: smiling, easier breathing, muscles relaxing, sustained eye contact.)

Take a break or stop if there are signs of displeasure (i.e.: grimace, clenching of muscles, persistent attempt to withdraw).

Touch Therapy Protocol

Touch Therapy is delivered to each hand for about 15 minutes, for a total of 25-30 minutes. The client can be in any comfortable position, either sitting or lying down. You should be seated comfortably. You can begin with either hand.

- 1.) **Wash** your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- 2.) **Preparation:**
 - a.) Look at the client's hands and arms to evaluate condition. Avoid areas that have lesions, are bruised or discolored.
 - b.) Use both your hands to make feathery light strokes down the arm from shoulder to fingertips.
 - c.) Repeat 3-5 times.
- 3.) **Range of Motion** (*Note: If ROM is impossible, rub joints with a circular motion. With elderly or infirm, proceed slowly with awareness.*):
 - a.) Hold client's arm above the wrist and above the elbow (keeping elbow bent). Do flexion, extension, abduction and adduction of the shoulder joint (5 times in each direction).
 - b.) Bend client's arm, supporting elbow with one hand. Holding client's hand above the wrist, do flexion, extension, supination and pronation of the elbow (5 times in each direction).
 - c.) Place your hands across client's wrist (one on top, one on bottom). Rub client's wrist between your palms. Do flexion and extension of the wrist (5 times in each direction).
 - d.) Support client's hand with their palm up. Hold their finger at tip, apply a slight traction and rotate each finger (3 rotations in each direction).
- 4.) **Hand Massage** (do the following strokes at least 3 times, maybe more):
 - a.) With client's palm up, stroke the palm with your thumbs (as if smoothing open pages of a book) from center out to sides (do this at the top, center and bottom of palm).
 - b.) Turn client's hand over. Stroke top of hand in same way. (Use a lighter pressure on dorsal side of hand as skin is usually more fragile.)
 - c.) Still supporting client's hand, apply massage to fingers from knuckle to fingertip. (Use any one or combination of the following: small circles, "walking" or gliding).
- 5.) **Acupressure to Points** (you can hold, gently press or massage each point):
 - a.) Work on LI 4.
 - b.) Gently touch the points on each finger at the base of the nail. Do each finger in turn.
 - c.) Work on SI 3.
 - d.) Work on TE 4.
 - e.) Work on TE 5.
- 6.) **Finishing:**
 - a.) Repeat feathery light strokes from shoulder down to fingertips 3 times.
- 7.) **Move to other hand:**
 - a.) Apply Touch Therapy to other hand following steps 2 through 6 above.
- 8.) **Wash** your hands thoroughly when finished.

This protocol adapted from a research project conducted at Cobble Hill Health Center in Brooklyn, NY from 1996 to 1997, funded by the New York State Department of Health, Alumna Barbara Goldschmidt ('88).