

**Date:** Sun, 26 Aug 2007 12:03:52 -0700 (PDT)**From:** "Cedar Barstow" <cedar@cedarbarstow.com>**Subject:** impact and intention**To:** "Nancy OCME" <nancy@cedarbarstow.com>, "Cedar Barstow" <cedar@cedarbarstow.com>, "Cedar Barstow" <cedar@cedarbarstow.com>

Below is some info sent by Cedar Barstow about impact and intention. Thought the check list might be a nice practical thing to offer students.

## IMPACT AND INTENTION

*Story: "Once at the end of a first session, my client asked for some "homework" so I suggested she do some journal writing about a habit she had discovered during the session. When she arrived for the next session, she sat down, looked at me, and immediately began almost screaming that she 'couldn't trust me...I was just like all the others... she knew this wasn't going to work...I had a formula that I applied to all my clients...and I wasn't going to take a personal interest in her...'. 'My goodness, you certainly have strong feelings!', I replied. 'Yes, I do! I just can't believe you gave me journal writing. I hate journal writing, and I bet you do that with everyone!.' 'Well, I guess I've learned something about you. I'll never ask you to journal again!' She then burst out laughing at the absurdity of this much anger. Soon we were both laughing. I let her know I understood how important my personal attention and care were to her. She sat back and said, 'I can't tell you how touching it is that you are interested in learning about me and willing to change how you are in response. And, even more amazing that you didn't just reject me as a client.' My intention with journaling homework was to offer her something to think about and help her get more involved in therapy. The impact was that she felt distanced and uncared for. Her unconscious intention in her anger was to prove to herself that once again therapy wasn't going to help. The impact of my response was that she got what she had longed for.*

**Impact is the effect your behavior has on others.  
Intention is the effect you want to have.**

The most effective and skillful use of power is made possible by being aware of and responsive to your impact on others. When your goal is to be of the best possible service to your clients, it is imperative to be interested in and attentive to their responses to your use of your Self, your role power, and your expertise. The best training and the best modalities will ultimately be compromised if you are not paying attention and then adjusting to how your clients are responding.

You may say one thing, for example, "I'd like to suggest you try..." but your impact may cause unexpected and unintended pain if your client takes this suggestion as a put down and manipulation. There need be no argument or defensiveness when this occurs, you and your client are both right. Your intention was good. Your client's experience (probably based on their past history) was of feeling misunderstood, judged, or disrespected. In other words, they felt harm.

## Tracking

Tracking is the moment to moment process of noticing your clients' responses to what is said, what they feel, the memories that emerge and the relationship itself. These responses will be visible or felt through tone of voice, postural movement, direct words, gestures and other physical manifestations. These can be quite subtle (for example, an emotion, if unnoticed and uncontacted disappears in a few seconds) or quite obvious changes in body language such as folding arms, looking away, tears.

For tracking for your impact, you can clarify and repair the relationship and prevent the difficulties from escalating. For example, you might say, "I notice that you had quite a strong reaction to what I just said. I wonder if you understood what I said in a way I didn't intend." Clients let you know that they feel confused, misunderstood, or hurt. If you don't notice, they will keep letting you know in ways that become more exaggerated. **Good tracking skills are one of your best resources for preventing harm and repairing the relationship.**

## Examples of Impact differing from Intention

You may intend to support your client's independence, and your client may experience your support as rejection. *Your client's perceptions may be influenced by past history and therefore expectations of being abandoned may arise and bring feelings of rejection.*

You may intend warmth and compassion, and your client may experience this as pity. *Your client expects pity and therefore does not perceive compassion even when it is offered.*

Your client may intend to be clear about a boundary, and you may experience this as non-cooperation. *You may be concerned about being good enough, and therefore perceive every criticism as non-cooperation on the part of your client.*

You may intend comfort by a hand on your client's shoulder, and your client may respond as if you were a former abuser. *Your client may transfer feelings, responses, or expectations onto you that belong to someone else in their life.*

You may intend respect, and your client experiences disrespect. *The meaning of direct eye contact differs in your client's culture.*

Misperceptions of intention can occur on the part of either the caregiver or the client. In human beings, past experiences often become beliefs that then become embodied as self-protective strategies. These strategies then become expectations about how they will be treated. People often have different experiences of the same event, because we all bring our own history and expectations to every relationship.

## Five Keys

You may find these keys useful for unlocking impact and intention discrepancies.

**Sensitize** yourself to the possibility that your impact was different from your intention.

**Listen** to your client's experience. (i.e. "Please tell me about your experience just now.")

**Validate** your client's experience. (i.e. "I can understand how you could feel hurt.")

**Explain** your intention in a simple way. (i.e. "It wasn't my intention to hurt you. My intention was \_\_\_\_\_.")

**Ask** what else is needed. (i.e., "How are you feeling now?" Or, "Is there anything else you need around this?" Or, "How are we doing now? Is there anything needed for relationship repair?")

A lack of understanding of this very simple concept of intention and impact accounts for a surprisingly large percentage of relationship difficulties. When you know your intention to be good, it can be challenging to shift your perspective to understand that your client experiences these actions and words as painful, critical, disrespectful, or confusing. When you understand that both of you are "right" in being true to your experience of a set of words or a behavior, resolution no longer needs to be focused on who's wrong, but rather, about clarifying how you understood each other.

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## Massage Therapy Ethics And Etiquette

By [Terry McDermott](#) 

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There is no avoiding this simple fact about massage therapy: Providing or receiving the healing power of touch is intimate. And intimacy, even in the most professional settings, can expose vulnerabilities and lead to uncomfortable and even awkward situations.

It is the responsibility of the massage therapist to create an environment that is conducive to a healthy, relaxing and satisfying experience for the client. On the other hand, it is the responsibility of the client to communicate with the massage therapist in a manner that allows the therapist to provide the service in a manner that puts the client at ease.

An experienced massage therapist will be able to guide the recipient through the massage process so that there is little confusion about some of the basic areas that cause embarrassment or confusion.

### Take It All Off?

The amount of clothing worn during a massage is dependent on the type of massage being administered. It

is normal to be completely undressed during a full body Swedish massage but is not absolutely necessary. If a client prefers to wear panties or briefs during the massage that is fine. Frankly, the client should be able to wear whatever makes them most comfortable. Regardless, the therapist will appropriately drape the client so that only the areas of the body being massaged are exposed.

The therapist will usually instruct the client about what to expect before they begin undressing. The therapist will then leave the room and allow the client to undress and get comfortable on the massage table under a sheet or towel. The massage therapist will then uncover only the area of the body being massaged.

### Touchy Feely

There are a variety of reasons that an individual may want a massage: stress relief, relaxation, general wellness, enhance circulation, improved flexibility, etc. No matter what the reason for the massage the therapist is always under the obligation to respect the boundaries set by the client and to establish his or her own boundaries.

Therapeutic massage is, by nature, a sensual experience. However, it is not intended to be a

sexual experience. If a client, male or female, makes any overtly sexual requests or suggestions then the therapist is obligated to professionally and forcefully identify the inappropriateness of these comments. Conversely, no therapist should take liberties or make assumptions relative to what parts of the body can be touched.

In general, it is never appropriate to touch the genitals during a massage session. The client cannot expect to be touched sexually and the therapist cannot touch a client in a sexual manner. Either case will betray the trust in the relationship between the two parties...to say nothing of the potential for legal and ethical issues.

And let's be clear. While there are documented benefits of breast massage, it is not, and should not be, included in a total body massage. Breasts are off limits unless a very special request is made of a qualified therapist. The National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork includes a specific policy in its Standards of Practice. The Board states that therapists may "only provide therapeutic breast massage as indicated in the plan of care, and only after receiving informed voluntary consent from the client." That being said, breast massage is legally restricted in some states.

An experienced massage therapist, male or female, will know how to deflect sexual advances by a client. If a subtle response does not do the job then a forceful statement or ending the session will be the correct response. Any client who feels that they are being touched inappropriately should feel confident in their right to speak up. If it is incidental contact or just an accident the therapist will apologize and continue with the client's discomfort noted accordingly.

#### Extracurricular Activity

As stated earlier, touch is intimate. Permission for such intimacy is accorded based on the massage therapist's professionalism and the trust of the client. At the same time, a relationship is established...a professional relationship but a relationship nonetheless. Understanding and honoring the boundaries of that relationship will allow both parties to fill their roles appropriately.

It is generally accepted that there ought not to be any personal relationship between the therapist and a paying client. Allowing the relationship to expand beyond the massage table to a social or even romantic connection is to invite a host of ethical dilemmas. A therapist could be perceived as taking advantage of a client who might be in a vulnerable state due to stress or physical ailment. In the state of Washington it is illegal to date a client within two years of the last session. That is strict stuff and is as likely to protect a therapist from misunderstandings as it is to protect a client.

#### Borders and Boundaries

Providing the healing power of touch is an honorable and ancient profession. The benefits of massage therapy are numerous and continue to gain acceptance as a mainstream health practice. No one should ever have to feel uncomfortable about getting a massage and they won't if they are in the hands of a well-trained and ethically centered massage professional.

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<http://www.massageschoolsguide.com>, a website offering resources for prospective massage therapists.

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**STEREOTYPES**

**Public perception** of massage therapy is still often confused and clouded with stereotypes.

- Helga the Russian massage therapist who cracks her patients bones.
- On "Friends", Phoebe is a ditzy flower child who bites her patients on the butt.
- On "Six Feet Under", a massage therapist performs sexual acts on a patient, and is then paid extra.

**Western culture** sees touch as a prelude to sexual activity. Most people avoid any kind of casual touch, such as a hug, because they see it as immoral. Many other cultures are more open about platonic and casual touch.

**HEALTHY TOUCH**

**Therapeutic touch** is one of the most powerful healing techniques in medicine today.

Unfortunately, massage therapy is often confused with sensual massage or prostitution. **See: Licensed Massage Therapist**

**Health care professionals** such as Psychiatrists, Doctors, and Nurses have always struggled with similar issues. Many people confuse working closely in a therapeutic environment with intimacy and sexual contact.



## **ANCIENT TREATMENT**

**Massage is the oldest** type of physical treatment. It has been used from the dawn of humanity to treat many sources of discomfort in the body and mind.

**From infancy**, mothers instinctively massage babies. Massaging premature infants helps boost their immune systems and they gain weight much quicker. We use touch to comfort and support each other.



## **STARVED FOR TOUCH**

**Non-sexual touch** is a vital and necessary part of our lives. People who are starved for touch, such as the elderly, suffer more physical and mental stress than those who are

touched regularly.

**Withholding touch** is damaging to the human body and mind. What is the worst punishment we can suffer short of the death penalty? *Solitary confinement.*

**We are touch starved** in our society. Unfortunately, many people who would benefit from and enjoy massage don't receive it. Many people are unable to separate healthy touch from sexual activity.



## GENDER ISSUES

**Female therapists** have many potential patients who assume that they are there for sex. They are often endangered by male patients, and may choose to only see females in their practice.

**Male therapists** have many potential patients who assume that they are predators. Many patients would never work with a male therapist under any circumstances.

**Patients** are often told by their partners that they are not allowed to work with a therapist of the opposite sex.

- Imagine getting fired from your job because you're female
- How about refusing to get your

car repaired because the mechanic is male

- What if your partner said that you couldn't shop at a store where anyone of the opposite sex worked



## **SETTING BOUNDARIES**

**Healthy boundaries** are how we interact with others in our personal and professional lives. We try not to be overly sensitive, at the same time we don't want people to walk all over us.

**Clear goals** are important for any professional relationship. We should never hand our car over to a mechanic, or our body over to a doctor without a clear statement of what we expect from them.

**LMT's are trained** to work with safe, healthy boundaries, and to deal with issues of intimacy. We must find a balance between being caring and being clinical.



## **BODY IMAGE**

**Massage can greatly** help someone who's dealing with an uncomfortable body image. Almost everyone's body image is negative in some way, and unfortunately this can

alienate them from their own body.

**An important lesson** in massage school is the therapists personal experience dealing with their own body image and intimacy issues.

**Your therapist will understand** any misgivings or concerns you have, because they've probably had the same experience.

## **TRUST AND HEALING**

**Trust is earned**, and patients and therapists work together to make the therapy comfortable and safe. A first time patient may choose not to undress, but work in shorts and a T-shirt.

**Patient's can choose** if there are some areas of the body that they don't want worked on. Some patients are uncomfortable with abdominal work, with others it's the shoulders or glutes.

**The comfort of the patient** is the first priority, and your therapist should always communicate with you before and during the session.

**Working too deeply**, and leaving the session feeling sore and uncomfortable is a common concern.

Your therapist will keep checking in about the pressure and if any areas are tender.



## **YOUR FEEDBACK**

**Each patient's experience** with massage is different. Some have received massage for years, and swear by it. Some had a disappointing experience, and would like to try again with a different therapist.

### **We need your feedback**

to let us better serve our patients in the future. Do you feel that the treatment was effective? Did the therapist listen to your concerns? Could your massage have been improved with something as simple as an extra pillow, or having the room a little warmer?

**Talk about your** experience with massage with your therapist, friends, family, and co-workers. It's the only way we will break through the stereotypes, and have people realize the value of massage as a medical treatment.

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1 Your client is a woman who is just going through a divorce. In the intake interview you discover she is not seeing a counselor, nor does she have a support network. During the first 15 minutes she talks to you about her worries, concerns and pain connected to the loss of her husband. At many points she asks your opinion about what she should do. She is very tense while she talks and does not relax at all. What do you say or do?

#2

A waiter in a restaurant you frequent asks you to come to his home and give his wife a massage, which he wants to provide her for their wedding anniversary. He wants it to be a surprise and does not intend to tell her about it beforehand. Do you accept the contract as stated?

