

## Stop Judging Your Beautiful Self

### Massage Fits You (yes, YOU!)

Rebecca Jones

Sol Benson loathed her body. It went beyond mere embarrassment at how "fat" she was. Deeper still was the conviction that her body was unworthy of love, underserving of nurturing.

And it was that alienation from her own body that for years kept Benson, a professional dancer who has waged a lifelong battle with anorexia, from getting massage. "I stayed away because getting a massage was being good to myself," said the 45-year-old Colorado mother of two, whose own mother and brother are massage therapists. "If I'm on a weight loss cycle, it's like 'I don't deserve love, I don't deserve food, I don't deserve to feel good about myself.'"

Benson explains, that helped the process. Her nonjudgmental ways helped Benson maintain balance. If, however, Rose had brought up weight, or in this case, the lack thereof, Benson admits it could have sent her into another purging cycle.

### Managing Body Image

Benson's story illustrates just how complex the issues of body image can be in 21st century America and just how valuable bodywork is in mending distorted body image.

Developing a positive body image about becoming present, grounded, open, aware, and unafraid to find what's

*Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face.*

-Victor Hugo



Self-acceptance is the first step to a healthier lifestyle and a happy relationship with yourself.

Benson credits Mary Rose--a Boulder, Colorado, massage therapist who has developed a special style of acupressure for the physically fragile--with understanding her psychological fragility enough to help her turn massage into a tool for healing, rather than a doorway to despair.

at the core and work through it. It's about being mindful, and listening to what your body has to say--a big step on the way to a healthier lifestyle and not necessarily an easy one to take. It requires courage and hard work to learn self-acceptance. And bodywork can play a key role in this endeavor.

It was the tender care from Rose,

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#### Office Hours and Contact

**Ohana Therapeutic Massage**  
**218-263-1501**  
**Winter Hours**  
**Mon. thru Thurs. 9am-6pm**  
**Friday 9am-2pm**  
**Saturday 12/2 and 12/16 9am-1pm**

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With America in the grip of an obesity epidemic--while at the same time holding up waif-like thinness as a cultural ideal--many people are worried about excess pounds and the harsh judgments that accompany them. Embarrassment at the thought of uncovering imperfect bodies for the close contact of a massage or bodywork session drives away untold numbers of potential clients.

The problem isn't limited to issues of weight. Many people avoid massage because of embarrassment about acne, surgical scars, birthmarks they consider unsightly, or some other physical deformity or flaw.

"A really common one is, 'I have such ugly feet,'" Rose says. "I always laugh and say that in 20 years, I haven't seen an ugly foot yet. People just have bad attitudes about their feet. In general, people are so self-judgmental."

## Relax, Really

Massage therapists specialize in the human body. They don't judge; rather, they see anatomy.

"This is something that's so prevalent and something we deal with daily," says Jonathan Burt, 27, a Detroit massage therapist and massage instructor. "I can't tell you how often I've heard, 'I have to wait until I get into shape before I come in for a massage.' Clients think they have to be in shape before they can relax." Newsflash: Relaxation is not exclusive to model body types.

Given the increased blood flow that results from massage, as well as the benefits to the lymphatic and other body systems, Burt believes overweight people and others who suffer from limited mobility are the people most likely to benefit from a good massage. That's why he especially treasures his larger clients.

The idea of taking your clothes off for a massage is often more intimidating than the reality. In fact, practitioners make draping an art form, ensuring the client doesn't feel exposed. And by the way, says Burt, you're not the only imperfect body around here. "We all have flaws," says Burt, who gave his first massage at age seven, when his grandmother, a double amputee, asked him to massage her stumps. "Myself, I'm not the

American Gladiator. I inform people I have flaws as well, and I'd be more than willing to help them overcome their self-consciousness."

## Viewpoint: Compassion

We're all in this together, and your massage therapist is operating from a place of compassion. Your practitioner is there to create and hold a safe space for you. Says Charlie Murdach, 38, a Portsmouth, New Hampshire, massage therapist, "For me, it's meeting the person where that person is and addressing that person in an appropriate and compassionate way."

Murdach, who has been a massage therapist since 1990, says he has yet to meet a potential client that he can't help, regardless of that person's physical condition. He believes this is due to the massage therapist's ability to avoiding

forcing anything, but to also being open to the possibility that miracles can happen.

Murdach explains your practitioner's role: "Whatever is going on with that person, whether it's a deformity or some type of disability, I make sure I can step up and hold the waters calm for that person. It doesn't matter if they're missing an arm, or have a deformed hand, the person who is standing there desires to move forward."

Getting a massage can do wonders for body image and help bridge the disconnect between the physical and emotional. A wounded psyche can lead you to believe you don't deserve a massage; this is when you most do! You are worthy--book your massage today.



**Bodywork can boost self-esteem and confidence, and even improve body image.**

# Happiness is Contagious

Maybe mom was right. Research suggests that surrounding yourself with friends and family who are happy can actually increase your own happiness.

Scientists at Harvard University and the University of California, San Diego, found that emotions, particularly happiness, have a viral effect in how they spread from one person to another. For every happy person in your physical social network, you have a 9 percent chance of increasing your own happiness. The effect is more pronounced the closer someone is to you geographically, and it does not seem to include electronic communications. The study, "Dynamic Spread of Happiness in a Large Social Network," can be found online in the British Medical Journal ([www.bmj.com](http://www.bmj.com)).

This is especially good news considering the potential health benefits of happiness and positivity. A study published in *Stroke* magazine has indicated a "significant association"

between optimism and a reduced risk of stroke. This is in addition to studies that have linked optimism to a healthier immune system, faster wound healing, and a lower risk of heart disease. While the exact cause of the benefits is not clear, one theory is that optimistic people are more likely to take care of their health. In addition, there is hope that teaching optimism could become part of a preventative program for various conditions.

What's one way to get happy? Try massage! Exposure to stress, a contributing factor to unhappiness, over a long period of time can increase the rate of neural degeneration and increase the risk for Alzheimer's disease. Luckily, a study from Umea University in Sweden has shown that just five minutes of massage has the potential to lower stress, and 80 minutes of massage has a tremendously positive effect on stress levels. Get massage, get happy, and cheer up your friends and family!



**Surrounding yourself with happy people is healthy!**

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## The Appropriate Portion

### Small Diet Modifications Can Mean Big Changes

Dropping a few extra pounds may mean reversing the voice in your head that sounds suspiciously like your mother telling you to clean your plate. Here's why: eating just one hundred extra daily calories--which may come from finishing everything on your plate, even after you're full--can represent ten added pounds in a year. Conversely, and fortunately, reducing your daily intake by just a small amount can help you manage and even lose weight. Following are a few portion control tips to help you meet your goals.

#### **Eat at Home**

Dine in, and fill your own plate. Studies show that most people serve themselves smaller portions at home, but eat more when someone else fills their plate. Restaurant portions have grown significantly in recent years, in some

cases doubling, and research has directly tied obesity with regular dining out. When you dine at home, serve yourself only what you think you can comfortably eat. Store leftovers in individual serving containers, and freeze them or take them for lunch the next day.

#### **Slow Down**

Pay attention to how fast you're eating. Slowing down helps you eat less and better recognize when you're full. When you dine out, ask your server for a box. If you continue to pick at your plate while talking with friends, you'll soon eat the whole thing without even thinking about it. This mindless eating can account for a lot of calories.

#### **Divvy up Dinner**

Sharing an entree with your dining partner and ordering an extra salad is a

great way to avoid eating a large meal. If you're traveling and dining alone, try an appetizer and salad.

You've heard the reports: Obesity is one of the greatest risk factors for heart disease, degenerative arthritis, and cancer, and it's now epidemic in the United States with an alarming 66 percent of all adults obese.

The good news is watching your portions, slowing down, and being mindful of the food you consume can make a difference. Even your mother would agree, you don't always need to clean your plate.

*The holiday season is the perfect time to reflect on our blessings and seek out ways to make life better for those around us.*

-Terri Marshall

As readers of our Newsletter, we like to give you the first peeks of the happenings at Ohana Therapeutic Massage. Check out below for the latest news!

WeGiveBack December Honorees!

In December, we like to honor those who work hard to keep our community up and running - Public Workers. These people in the local, county and state level work hard (and often underappreciated) to ensure our community runs smoothly. From December 11th-22nd, Public Employees can qualify to receive a FREE 30 minute massage at Ohana Therapeutic Massage! For more details or to schedule your free 30 minute massage, please call us at 218-263-1501.

December Events!

Stress, What Stress? ~ Tuesday Dec. 5th at 5:30.

We will be closed Saturday December 22-Monday December 25th to enjoy some time with our loved ones! We will resume normal business hours on Tuesday December 26th, 9a-6pm.

Call or visit our [Facebook page](#) to learn more!

## Ohana Therapeutic Massage

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Member, **Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals**