Understanding Emotional Response

This power point is for your reference, it will be covered in class.

Grounding

Because of the emotional issues this class addresses please ground yourself.

On a regular basis you should be grounding yourself prior to starting each massage to protect yourself from the emotions and issues each client brings to your practice.

Today: We’ll Seek to Understand

• What are emotions and where do they come from
• How does the brain and body play a role in the anatomy and physiology of emotions
• Understand emotional pathways
• The difference between emotional response and emotional release
• How are emotions and the senses connected?
• Establish and review appropriate boundaries and identify acceptable responses to a client’s emotional release/response
• Body memories and flashbacks
• The types of trauma and abuse
• Stress and coping mechanisms
• Emotional freedom technique

Emotions

Emotions are feelings that color our lives and allow us to experience all the joys and sorrows of life . . . eating a hot fudge sundae the regret of saying something unkind, the joy of seeing a close friend, the grief of losing a loved one or the beautiful sight of the Grand Canyon.

Where do emotions come from?

Emotions originate in the limbic system in the brain. The limbic system is a small structure located in the middle of the brain between the lower center or brainstem and the higher center or cortex. The brainstem controls alertness and arousal and sends sensory messages to the cortex via the limbic system. Most of thinking and learning take place within the cortex. Memory, an important component of learning, involves the limbic system.

Neuro-Chemical Response
Our Senses

Everything begins with our senses: touch, sight, hearing, smell, taste, and somatic feedback. The fast path travels to the Amygdala for physiological responses to the stimuli. The slow path advances to the sensory cortex for analysis. From there, it combines memories to form a precise and detailed account of what has been encountered. Long term memories stored in the Hippocampus help us make our final decision regarding how to respond.

Emotional Injuries

All of us... All social classes, all races and genders, and all ethnicities suffer emotional injuries. We all, as adults and children, experience disappointment, frustration, and failure. We experience being "left out" or "over-looked".

In healthy development, we can recover from such experiences. Like physical wounds, our emotional wounds must heal as well. Without addressing emotional wounds, the injury will spread and present itself in unhealthy ways. A foundation of optimism and resilience can be fostered if we strengthen our inner ability to deal with disappointment, failure and hurt.

Attributions

Emotions arise from memories and reactions to current events. Emotions are formed by how we think about the past, present and future. We all try to "explain" or reason our own behavior and that of others. The way we attempt to explain behavior is called attributions. For example, when a father gets angry at his son, the child might think his dad is grumpy or perhaps he had a long day at work. This first explanation may cause the child to blame himself for his father's anger. The second may contribute it to his father's personality. The third may see the anger as his father's reaction to the situation.

Conversely...

When we are sad or upset, we "can't think straight." Prolonged emotional distress can destroy our ability to learn. We all know how hard it is to learn or remember something when we are anxious, angry or depressed.

Anxiety is the enemy of memory. Often, it's not what happens, but what we think about what happens to us that counts.

Dr. Martin Seligman says, "Our thoughts and beliefs are our reality."

Why are emotions so important?

Motivation

Our emotions and thoughts can strongly affect our motivation. Motivation is the "push" or "drive" that compels us to do something. Learning and utilizing social and emotional skills can help us manage our emotional responses to frustrating, challenging or hurtful tasks and experiences. Emotions are the "on and off" switch to learning.

"...in many of today's classrooms we see children whose intellectual energies and capacities are drained by negative emotional states. Emotion is the on/off switch for learning." – Priscilla Vail, M.A.T.

It is easy to see why emotions are so crucial to making good decisions and thinking clearly. Emotions can encourage or disrupt thinking and learning. When we are happy, we have a "clear mind". Positive emotions such as contentment, joy, acceptance, trust and fulfillment can enhance learning.
Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is learned rather than inherited like general intelligence. Because it is learned, emotional intelligence can be strengthened and nurtured. As children, parents and teachers play an important role in how well a child’s emotional intelligence is sculpted. Dr. Daniel Goleman identified five qualities that comprise emotional intelligence:

- knowing your emotions (self-awareness)
- managing our emotions (impulse control)
- motivating ourselves to achieve goals (persistence, zeal and self-motivation)
- recognizing emotions in others (empathy)
- managing relationships with others (social skills).

Externalizing Behaviors

Emotional problems can manifest as behavior problems. Sometimes they are externalized or “under controlled”. Often, the person is unable to identify the source of their anger. Expressing anger does not mean getting rid of it. It becomes another learned behavior. Replacing anger with assertiveness is more likely to achieve the desired goal.

- Fighting
- Cursing
- Stealing
- Destruction of property
- Arson
- Impulsive behaviors
- Refusal to follow rules

Internalizing Behaviors

Some who have trouble managing their emotions tend to “over control” or internalize their feelings. These behaviors may lead to poor school performance, which can reinforce feelings of anxiety, sadness and low self-esteem.

- Social withdrawal
- Feelings of loneliness
- Unexplained physical symptoms
- Feeling unloved
- Feeling sadness
- Nervousness
- Irritability

Smell

Smell is a specialized chemical sense. It is interesting to note that the olfactory cells are the only place in the human body where the central nervous system is in direct contact with the external environment.

When we detect the smell of something, there’s a direct contact between the molecules of scent and our own receptors. When oils are inhaled, micro-molecules of essential oils travel through the nasal passages to the limbic system of the brain which is the seat of memory and emotions. The breathing in of essential oils is thought to trigger memories and emotions within the limbic system, which in turn stimulates a response within the entire system. With the memory comes instant recall of the associated emotions – pleasure, happiness, laughter, affection or perhaps sadness, pain, or grief.

Colors

Different colors evoke different reactions in viewers. Be aware that some of these reactions will be culturally specific. For example, in the U.S. brides often wear white as a symbol of purity and widows wear black as a symbol of mourning. However, in many Asian cultures, brides wear black.

Music

Among the broadest and most complex research topic in the study of emotions is music. Generally in the therapeutic professions calming music is preferred. Some prefer lyrics, while others prefer silence with white noise. Choose a selection of music for your massage room and ask the client if they prefer something, to bring it or sample your selections.
Emotions and Therapeutic Touch

Now that we’ve taken some time to understand emotions, let’s get to the matter at hand. Our profession, by its very nature of hands on bodies, can at times place us in position of being present to the good, not so good and bad emotional states of our clients. Our client’s bodies are a “storehouse” of life experiences.

Response noun [ri’-span(t)s]
1. The act of responding.
2. A reply or an answer.
3. A reaction, as that of an organism or a mechanism, to a specific stimulus: i.e. responses by the immune system to pathogen.

Tissue Memory

An emotional release occurs because an emotion was stored in the first place. Tissues have memory. In fact, our bodies are incredible recording devices. You often hear of “muscle memory” in relation to athletics and the movement arts. We are accustomed to the idea that the body remembers actions; we might be less familiar with the idea that it also remembers feelings. A held emotion can lead to a holding in the body. The opposite is true, too: a tension in the body can lead to holding onto an emotion. If follows from this that releasing tension in the body might release an emotion, and that the emotional release can lead to greater openness in the body—as well as preventing a return to a state of tension. Emotional stress creates physical tension, and vice versa. Just recall the last time you were nervous about an upcoming event to see how emotions affect the body. To experience the converse—how physical tensions affects emotion—put a small rock in your shoe, walk around with it all day, and see how hard it becomes to stay good humored as you go about a busy day! Usually this cross traffic between emotions and the body are transient.

Fascia

The main mechanism of tissue memory seems to occur in fascia. Like an interconnecting web, fascia is a continuous sheet that wraps around all the parts of our body— our muscles, bones, organs, nerves, arteries, spine... Fascia moves with the body, and indeed makes the symphony of all our movements possible. Consequently restriction introduced into fascia by trauma will lead to a decrease in function in the tissues.

Normally our emotions and body are in an ongoing exchange. This is natural as long as it remains fluid. The problem starts when there is a sufficient shock to either our emotional experience or our bodies. At that point, that traumatic experience can become locked in our tissues. It becomes a kink, interrupting that natural back and forth communication. Such trauma doesn’t just come from blunt force to the body. It also happens when the body wake up due to a strong emotional experience, and then never quite releases back down. Chronic postures can also create a tension in the fascia that becomes associated with a certain state of being. The classic example of this is the slouched posture of a depressed person. The posture itself exacerbates depression (for example by limiting a full breath) and can maintain that depressed state even when the person doesn’t feel depressed.

Bodywork and Emotional Release

With an understanding of how emotions are stored in the physical body, we can understand why bodyworkers help to release them. Muscle tension is one of the most frequent ways we hold emotion. The resulting effect is holding patterns and dis-ease that play out as pathologies in our lives. By relaxing muscles, reducing tension and stimulating the parasympathetic system, massage frees patterns where unconscious feeling is being held. Once the tension is gone, the unconscious mind loses its grasp and emotion may emerge.

People who hold excessive tension often have hypersensitive nervous systems. Supportive touch offered by a trained massage therapist can calm the nervous system, which changes the mind-body pattern. This calming effect creates freedom for feelings to come forth and be released in a safe, supportive, non-judgmental environment. If a release does occur, it’s important not to make suggestions of judgement. Don’t withdraw from the client.

What does emotional release look like?

Emotional releases can take many forms. A client may feel sadness, grief, anger, fear and even laughter. Positive feelings may come up in releases, but this is rare since our culture is supportive of expressing positive feelings in the moment rather than suppressing them.

Some emotional releases are associated with specific traumatic events while others reveal more chronic thought patterns. What is important to know is that the body is offering an opportunity to grow and change beyond habitual patterns.

Memories may come from a particular event but the client may not be able to associate the feelings with anything from their past. Some clients may cry, others may simply have a desire to take a deep breath.

Most releases surface and resolve quickly. If emotional releases, however, are frequent and strong or cause anxiousness or fear it is important to seek the help of a professional counselor.
Section 140 What Is Not Included in the Scope of Practice

The following are NOT included in the Scope of Practice of Massage Therapists:

- Diagnosis of medical or orthopedic conditions or illnesses
- The performing of surgery or other procedures requiring a medical license
- The prescribing, changing, dispensing and administering of legend or over the counter drugs or herbal medication.
- Genital, intra-anal, intra-vaginal manipulation or applications.
- High velocity/low amplitude thrust force to any articulation of the human body as performed in chiropractic, osteopathic or naturopathic adjustments.
- Ear candling.
- Application of ultrasound, electrotherapy, laser therapy, microwave therapy, injection therapy, diathermy or electronic nerve stimulation.
- Depilation, waxing, hair extractions and electrolysis.
- Acupuncture and Chinese pharmacology.
- Moxibustion through the use of needles.
- Western balneology.
- Diet and nutritional counseling, including the recommendation of vitamins, supplements and other nutraceuticals.
- Biofeedback.
- Principles of therapeutic strengthening exercises, including Personal Fitness Training, Tai Ji Quan (Tai Chi), Yoga Instructor Training.
- Psychological counseling.
- Hypnotherapy.
- Guided imagery intended for counseling or psychotherapeutic processing.
- Naturopathy.
- Homeopathy, which includes Bach Flower Remedies.
- Cosmetology or the specific practices intended to beautify the skin.
- Colonics irrigation and other methods of internal hydrotherapy.
- Intentional use of techniques to evoke an emotional response in the client.

What to do . . .

1. **Simply be there for them and hold space**
   - Hold a safe place for the client to continue the emotional release. Remember to nostril breathe and stay grounded with clear boundaries.

2. **Do nothing**
   - You do not have to "do" anything other than just be there for them. Your presence is enough. Do not offer tissue during the release as it disrupts the flow of the emotion.

3. **Say little to nothing**
   - Allow them to complete the release and speak if they feel they need to. Breathe.

Reflective Listening

- Presence
- Acceptance
- Support
- Empathy
- Understanding
- Accuracy

- What I hear you saying is . . .
- My sense of what you’re saying is . . .
- My understanding is . . .
- Do you mean . . .
- It seems as if . . .
- I get a sense that . . .
- It feels as though . . .

not included.

- Analysis
- Interpretation
- Judgement
- Comparison
- Advising
- Confronting
Somatic Resonance

Somatic Resonance is how grief/trauma may resonate in your body when you are working with another’s emotional releases. What they say may trigger or resonate a response to your own grief/trauma. As a body therapist you use your own body as an instrument to guide the sessions.

As a body therapist and energy worker you need to be acutely aware of what triggers you are feeling and recognize them as your own and not the clients in order to have well defined barriers and boundaries.

It’s ok to cry with your clients just not more than them.

Self-Care

When you are involved in empathetic communication (that which mirrors the experiences of another) we must take care of the self to prevent bereavement overload, compassion fatigue and burnout.

- Run hands and forearms under cold water
- Warm Epsom salt baths
- Nostril breathing at all times
- Engage in a ritual everyday when you finish with clients or negative people
- Write your feelings in a journal
- Talk to a consultant
- Use techniques and exercise to discharge your energy
- Receive bodywork to restore balance in the body and mind

Trauma and Touch

One in five clients has the potential of being a trauma survivor. Every practitioner who uses touch therapy and bodywork modalities need to possess a basic knowledge about trauma, abuse and a clear protocol for working with these clients.

A practitioner should develop ethical guidelines and techniques for working with clients who are survivors of physical, emotional or sexual trauma. These skills are learned over time with ongoing training, supervision and increased self-knowledge.

YOUR TURN

- Sexual abuse/assault/rape
- Domestic Violence
- Bullying
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- PTSD
- Anxiety/Depression

Potential for harm from uninformed treatment

Practitioners minimize the risk of re-traumatization by being sensitive to the experience of the survivor and its effect on their work together.

Potential for harm from uninformed treatment

Trauma can sometimes increase when treatment is performed without the presence of other therapies or done in a way that doesn’t allow the client to integrate the experience. Clients with a history of trauma or abuse often don’t have the ability to protect themselves when a practitioner errs. Clients can exhibit physical symptoms which can indicate unresolved trauma including: chronic fatigue, insomnia, chronic joint and muscle pain through the body and a weak immune system.

Practitioner Should Understand

- The origin of reactions
- How to recognize them
- Best practices for touch therapy
- When to recommend medical attention
- How to advise additional therapies to support the client
Where are they at in their therapy?  

What other therapies are being done to aide in the process?  

How do you know when to draw the line between being helpful and crossing into another’s scope of practice?

It is useful to understand abuse and the process of recovery to properly structure the treatment session. This ensures the appropriate level of treatment for the survivor.  

Clients may not always tell therapists if they feel violated. Assisting them to perform work, providing therapists and group leaders with tools to create the space for clients to feel safe, supported and acknowledged.  

Physical Abuse  

Physical Abuse – All forms of physical abuse can leave scars that close people off to themselves. Children often are the victims to physical abuse; however, anyone can be on the receiving end of it.

Physical abuse shows in the form of:  

• Violent beatings  
• Corporal Punishment  
• Food deprivation  
• Aggressive tickling that doesn’t stop  
• Spousal battery  
• The threat of violence as a means of control  
• The use of physical torture as discipline of spouses and children

Emotional Abuse  

Emotional Abuse – Emotional trauma is experienced by everyone. Most individuals experience these traumas and move on. However, when emotional abuse occurs, the extent of the trauma may exceed the individual’s ability to effectively cope. It inflicts harm to the psychological well-being of an individual. Usually victims have feelings of fear, shame, rage or despair.  

Emotional abuse can occur in the forms of:  

• Direct verbal threats  
• Attacks  
• Taunting  
• Belittling language used to intimidate, demean or hurt  
• Emotional withholding  
• Emotional neglect

Sexual Abuse  

Sexual Abuse – Sexual abuse ranges from inappropriate seductive behavior and sexual touching to sexual intercourse. Violations are often accompanied by other types of mental, physical and emotional torment. It can include more than one perpetrator or more than one victim, such as cults, secret societies and organized criminal activities.

Sexual Abuse can include:  

• Rape  
• Date Rape  
• Partner or spouse rape  
• Incest

The Message from Water

Three Stages of Recovery  

Safety  

Establish physical and psychological safety. As the client develops a sense of safety, they can begin to take initiative and take charge of their recovery.  

Remembering and Mourning  

In the presence of safety, formerly unconscious, fragmented, disguised and deeply buried memories surface. These memories can be painful, including cases that were buried by being repressed and transformed into an integral part of a life story. The process can be profoundly painful and upsetting for the person as the memories come to light, the accompanying grief and loss.

Reconnection  

The survivor begins to look to the future and imagine a whole, functional self. The person can recognize that trauma and not be retraumatized by it. If the survivors are able to let go of the past, the person will turn the experience into social action, having a great transforming effect on themselves and others.
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD

Symptoms

- Hyperarousal
  A state of constant alertness to danger experienced by the survivor of trauma.
- Re-experiencing
  When past traumatic events recur as vivid memories interrupting the course of life presently.
- Negativity
  Refers to the negative changes to beliefs and feelings that may come as a result of trauma.
- Avoidance
  The state of actually avoiding situations, people or thought processes that trigger memories of the trauma.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is a mental health condition triggered by experiencing or seeing a terrifying event. Individuals that have gone through severe or repeated sexual, emotional or physical trauma, can have profound and lasting damage to their psychological, cognitive and emotional function. Repeated trauma can destroy a person’s sense of self and relationships with others. A person who has experienced prolonged abuse or trauma, can have no guideposts for judging who is worthy of trust or which situations are safe.

Body Memories and Flashbacks

Trauma survivors often experience body memories and flashbacks. Memories can range from an integrated memory to a brief, faint recollection that is gone in an instant (integrated memory), to a flashback which is out of a person’s control.

Integrated Memory – A memory that may have been painful at one time but has been remembered, understood and accepted.

Unintegrated Memory – When a memory is so painful that parts of the memory are blocked and many of the details missing.

Flashbacks – The experience of reliving or re-experiencing a traumatic event as if it’s occurring or is imminent.

Flashbacks

Can be triggered by touching any part of the body or by a particular emotion, sensation, or experience. The client may have intense emotional reactions such as fear, sobbing, or feelings of rage with physical trembling. When a flashback occurs, the person is dissociated with the present. Our bodies hold memories, so when an emotionally charged area is touched, repressed memories may surface.

Retrieving a Client from a Flashback

- Gently break contact with your hands
- Make voice contact
- Make eye contact
- Cover the client with a blanket
- Follow client’s instructions
- Encourage the client to sit up
- Take time to talk about what happened

Important Information

National Center for PTSD
HTTP://WWW.PTSD.VA.GOV
1.800.784.2433

Anxiety Disorder Support
HTTP://WWW.ADAAA.ORG

Keep a telephone list of the safe house hotlines and crisis centers in your area.

Stress and Coping Mechanisms

Stress is a normal part of life. In small quantities, stress is good – it can motivate you and help you be more productive. However, too much stress, or a strong response to stress, is harmful. It can set you up for general poor health as well as specific physical or psychological illnesses like infections, heart disease, or depression. Persistent and unrelenting stress often leads to anxiety and unwanted behaviors like overeating and abuse of drugs and alcohol.
Emotional Freedom Technique

The Emotional Freedom Technique, or EFT, is a form of psychological acupressure, based on the same energy meridians used in traditional acupuncture to treat physical and emotional ailments for over five thousand years, but without the invasiveness of needles.

Simple tapping with the fingertips is used to input kinetic energy onto specific meridians on the head and chest while you think about your specific problem – whether it is a traumatic event, an addiction, pain, etc. – and voice positive affirmations. EFT can help achieve your body’s ideal healing and preventative powers by addressing emotional barriers that stand in your way.

Psychological research shows that fear response can be extinguished by pairing the response with relaxation. As one emotion is imposed over the other, one must shift and fall away.

EFT is very easy to learn, and will help you:

• Remove Negative Emotions
• Reduce Food Cravings
• Reduce or Eliminate Pain
• Implement Positive Goals

This combination of tapping the energy meridians and voicing positive affirmation works to clear the “short-circuit” – the emotional block – from your body’s bioenergy system, thus restoring your mind and body’s balance, which is essential for optimal health and the healing of physical disease.

Some people are initially wary of the principles that EFT is based on – the electromagnetic energy that flows through the body and regulates our health is only recently becoming recognized in the West. This is a basic overview on how and where to tap, and the proper affirmation techniques, so that you can begin using EFT immediately to help yourself and others. It will also provide an introduction to some EFT techniques and principles you can employ.

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1. Where in your body do you feel the emotional issue most strongly?
2. Determine the distress level in that place in your body on a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 is maximum intensity and 0 is no intensity.
3. The Setup: Repeat this statement three times, while continuously tapping the Karate Chop point on the side of the hand.  
   "Even though I have _______ (name the problem), I deeply and completely accept myself."
4. The Tapping Sequences: Tap about 7 times on each of the energy points in these two diagrams, while repeating a brief phrase that reminds you of the problem.
5. Determine your distress level again on a scale of 0 to 10 again. If it’s still high, say:
   "Even though I have some remaining _______ (problem), I deeply and completely accept myself."
6. Repeat from Step 1 till your distress level is as close to 0 as possible.

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