

## ***PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD!***

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Although it's been described and mistaken as massage, Reflexology or what has also been called Reflexo-Therapy and Zone Therapy is so much more than *just a massage*. First practiced in ancient Chinese, Egyptian and Indian cultures circa 2000 B.C., Reflexology, the term given to the 'study of reflexes' by Eunice Ingham known as "the Mother of Reflexology", has been studied by many Doctors and lay people in the North American culture since it was first introduced by Dr. William Fitzgerald in the United States in the early 1900's.

But what is reflexology really? More importantly what can it do for you? Nerve endings or reflexes that begin and end in our hands, ears and feet are actually interconnected to every part, gland and organ in our bodies via our spinal cord and brain. Of these three extremities, the feet contain the majority of these extremely sensitive nerve endings (approximately 7200 in each foot), and through the application of pressure to specific areas, the body relaxes and shifts into parasympathetic mode or better described as "rest and repair" mode, the opposite of the "fight or flight" response. Major benefits reflexology gives is relaxation and release of tension, improved cardiovascular and lymphatic circulation and drainage, and it helps to maintain or re-establish homeostasis in the body. Most often Reflexology Therapists will primarily work the feet. In conjunction, hands, ears and face may also be worked or they are worked in place of the feet when limbs are missing or the feet have sustained injured.

It's been said that the ears, hands and feet are actually "microcosms" of the body. Therefore any illness or imbalance occurring in the body will be reflected in the hands, ears and feet in the form of sensitive, tender or painful areas. Eunice Ingham may have conveyed this message best in her book titled *Stories The Feet Have Told* originally written in 1945 then later revised and published in 1951. In other words, your feet don't "lie" because they can't lie. Imbalance in the body at times may be noticed quickly, other times what is going on inside of you cannot be easily detected if visible symptoms have not yet manifested. What reflexology is able to do then is call attention to what is not functioning optimally in any of the twelve systems of the body. When deficiencies are detected in the form of pain experienced and / or texture beneath the surface of the skin, a Reflexology Therapists will suggest proper follow up with a medical doctor to further investigate the cause of illness or imbalance pertaining to a specific area of the body.

Since Reflexology Therapists are not medical doctors, they are not able to diagnose illness, prescribe medication, or treat for a specific condition. In addition, they are some teachings of reflexology that promote the use of instruments or tools on the feet, hands, and ears to reach the deep reflexes. Such is not the case with the Reflexology Association of Canada (R.A.C.). The association does not endorse the use of any tools and reflexology techniques are taught using only the pressure of the hands. Pressure applied is deep yet relaxing and will induce the desired result of stimulation and facilitation of the body's own healing. Reflexology as a healing art is not only restorative but is also preventative in one's health and well-being.

Beginning with sessions of 30 to 60 minutes every 48 to 72 hours for acute conditions until the body begins to experience a “healing crisis”, then moving to sessions of once per week until progress has been made for chronic conditions. Once the pain and tenderness in the reflexes subsides, sessions of once per month will assist to achieve homeostasis – an internal balance and maintain optimal functioning of all systems within the body. Pressure however, may be adjusted by the practitioner and will vary to the client’s tolerance level. Lighter pressure is applied for infants, elderly and pregnant individuals that are in their second or third trimester only. The pain or tenderness if any, is only present during the session and will not linger long after the practitioner has stopped touching the feet.

It would be neglectful of me not to mention what may actually “scare off” some people from using reflexology as a natural means to better health, and what has at times deterred some who have tried reflexology once, from continuing to endure “because it’s just too painful”. This experience is what German homeopathic physician Constantine Hering (1800-1880) termed *Hering’s Law of Cure*.

Through his many years of clinical observation and insight, Hering ascertained that there are three characteristics of the healing process. First, healing occurs from the inside out. Usually this comes in the form of an inward increase in energy and well-being. Second, healing occurs from above to below. Symptoms begin to disappear from the upper part of the body proceeding downward. Third, symptoms experienced during a previous illness may be experienced again during the healing process. In essence, the body’s response then is to dispel itself of any dormant remains of that imbalance. It is important to note that suppressing the healing crisis will not induce a cure for the body. The body must be allowed to experience this “temporary discomfort” in order to move towards better health.

Having said that, it may be appropriate to say that the old adage “no pain, no gain” may very well be true in the case of reflexology as a natural means to facilitating healing in your body. Be healthy and live well...on “too good” feet!

**Gina M. Bello, Founder and Director of Hand Heart & Sole Wellness**

R.A.C. Certified Reflexology Therapist, Instructor

RCRT, RRP

Certified Chair Massage Practitioner

Swedish Massage Practitioner

Thermal Palms® Massage Practitioner

Certified IonCleanse® Detox Technician

Certified Auricular Therapist

Certified Reiki Practitioner

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