

# Choosing your therapist .. What to look for.

By David Hall, Qualified Massage Therapist

One of my recent massage patients - an experienced masseur himself - told me that during an extended visit to a southern capital he had visited about 25 different masseurs.

"Only one was any good," he said.

I'm sure the strike rate for quality of masseurs in Townsville is much higher than one in 25. The many local masseurs I know and work or have contact with are all highly skilled and all provide an excellent massage.

However, if you've never had a massage or are relatively new to genuine therapeutic massage, how can you tell if your therapist is genuine, well trained, competent, qualified, experienced and giving you value for money?

Obviously by the end of the massage, you'll know whether you thought it beneficial, enjoyable and worthwhile. Maybe you never want to see that therapist again because of his/her manner or technique, he/she made you feel really uncomfortable or simply hurt too much.

## Indicators...

However, there are some indicators which separate a qualified and experienced masseur who gives you top value for money from someone who may have had little or no formal training but has developed a personal style which feels pleasant at the time but is of little therapeutic value.

If you don't want to directly ask the therapist about his/her training and experience, here are some tips to help identify a qualified and competent masseur. The therapist should firstly discuss your needs and expectations, techniques to be used and areas of the body to be massaged.

If you want a massage just for relaxation, the techniques will be different to those used if you need to specifically alleviate muscular or joint pain, or if you feel run down and your immune system needs a boost or you want to reduce fluid build-up.

Genuine therapeutic massage is not sexual or sensual and does not include the genitals. If you ask for a full body massage, the therapist should clarify the areas to be massaged rather than take for



granted what he/she thinks you mean.

Your idea of "full body" may be only the entire back of the body from head to toe. Or vice versa - you may expect more than you get.

A qualified masseur would assume full body to also include muscles or muscle groups in the front - such as front of the legs, abdomen or chest - because of the vital interaction of muscles between the front and back of the body.

If you go to a therapist and mention you have had many massages or many different types of massage with someone else before, the therapist should still want to clarify your expectations.

For example, you might think a very firm relaxation massage by a masseur trained only in Swedish massage, where you felt some twinges of pain in tight muscles, is the same as a deep tissue remedial massage. It's not!

Parts of a remedial treatment might be quite painful at the time because it works deep into the muscles, but the massage still leaves you extremely relaxed and has much longer lasting benefits.

The therapist will avoid causing you embarrassment by keeping you appropriately covered.

A variety of light, firm and/or heavy techniques (depending on the style of massage) will be used in a systematic, sequential and co-ordinated way.

One of the important therapeutic benefits of massage is to boost blood and lymphatic fluid circulation, and therefore carries oxygen and other nutrients to the muscles and organs. For this reason, qualified therapists massage so blood flow is generally directed towards the heart.

For example, with a massage to the full back of your body, therapists would usually start at your feet or

upper legs and work (push the flow of blood and lymph) upwards towards your heart. Some may start with your back, then legs, but still push towards the heart.

The highly specialised lymphatic drainage massage uses a totally different technique to achieve the same result and actually starts around the heart. Another benefit of massage is it helps balance muscle tone on left/right and front/back sides of the body.

Hence, a competent therapist will work in a systematic way to achieve this result and not just jump from one part of the body to another for no apparent reason.

If it seems your bones or joints need cracking back into place, remember that it's usually tight or taut muscles that pull them out of alignment in the first place.

A good therapist works to balance the muscles with a range of massage and stretching techniques so other bone-cracking structural realignment most times is not necessary.

### **Fluence and Energy**

Any massage - from the very gentle lymphatic drainage to sometimes painful deep tissue remedial work where elbow pressure may be used - requires fluency and energy, not just a careless, "wishy washy" movement of hands over the body. The patient can easily sense the difference.

During a firm but gentle relaxation (Swedish) massage, a therapist also experienced in Remedial massage will know if there are problems with deeper muscle tissue. He/she may recommend if they think a future deep tissue massage is advisable. Otherwise, it never hurts to ask the therapist if they found any problem areas.

A therapist who is passionate about his/her work will explain to you during the massage the reason for and types of treatment techniques. But, obviously, if you wish just to lay there and relax and enjoy the massage without conversing, that will be respected.

### **Better Informed.**

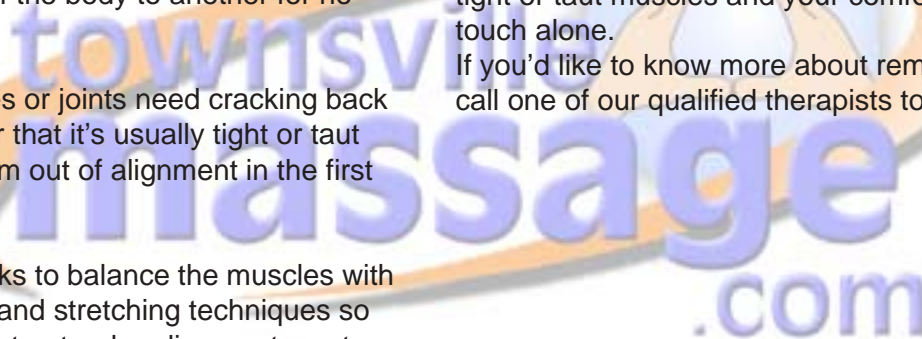
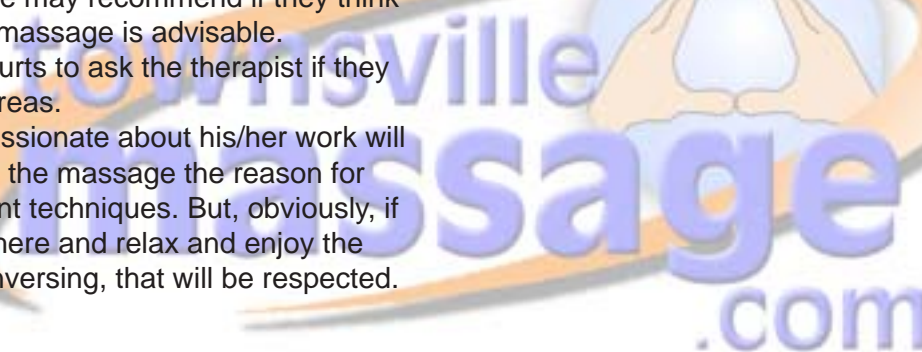
At the end of the massage, you should not only feel better, but be much better informed about how and why the massage works.

With muscular problems, muscles other than where you feel sore are often involved. You will probably feel more at ease if it has been explained why a particular muscle may need to be massaged when it has not previously felt sore or there is no apparent relationship to the problem area.

Massage is probably the fastest growing field of health care. A qualified and competent therapist should be easily able to convince you why it is usually the most effective treatment for muscular aches and pains.

Patient feedback during a massage is useful, but an experienced therapist can usually assess areas of tight or taut muscles and your comfort levels by touch alone.

If you'd like to know more about remedial massage, call one of our qualified therapists today.

The logo for Townsville Massage .com features the text "townsville massage .com" in a blue, sans-serif font. The word "townsville" is smaller and positioned above "massage". The ".com" is positioned below "massage". The text is overlaid on a graphic of two hands in a prayer position, with fingers pointing upwards, set against a light blue circular background. The entire logo is partially obscured by a large, semi-transparent watermark of the same logo in the background.This is a duplicate of the logo described above, featuring the text "townsville massage .com" and a graphic of two hands in a prayer position.