

## Don't Get Too Caught Up In It By Todd Fiorentino

I found myself telling a client the other day: "Don't listen to massage therapists..." and was surprised by my own statement. After all, I am one, right?! He said that he received a massage in Atlantic City and the therapist said his feet had a lot of problems. Perhaps I'm wrong, but I didn't find a thing wrong with his feet. It's important to realize that no one is perfectly balanced, and this is okay. Our goal isn't to make you perfect, it's to make your body work more efficiently and keep you out of pain.

Flexibility, coordination, quickness – these are also good goals – and massage can deliver such results. But don't get too caught up in what people say. Consider how often doctors are wrong even with all of their training. I'm not saying to ignore the recommendations of practitioners, but think it through for yourself. *Pain is elusive*. As therapists and clients, we have to *keep after it*. There is some level of guesswork involved in bodywork because we're not simply dealing with the body—we're dealing with the mind.

The neurological aspects of muscular dysfunction are not easy to decipher. We are all connected to "the source" or whatever you want to call it. So many things register with our body without us actively knowing it. Magnetic fields, vibrational frequencies, microwaves, radio and cell tower waves, tone of voice, criticism, relationships, food, water, air, bad energy, good energy, past lives and experiences, the future. It's amazing to think that all of these factor into your state of wellbeing, and yet it does.

If you feel like you are under-achieving in life, this can manifest in your body. The expectations of others can create mental anguish, which can lead to physical problems. Some believe that the wishes and prayers of others can affect your reality and person. It's absolutely clear that certain people can drain energy and others seem to fill us up. I mention all of this to point out the basic problem of knowledge. Without getting too philosophical here, I just want to say, to really *know* something is incredibly difficult.

Sometimes we look far and wide, around every bend, under every rock, looking to others to solve our problems, and yet, the answer was right there in front of us. It was in the reflecting pool, inside ourselves, at home. People want passive solutions; they are looking for that one thing that will make it all go away like a pill. Yet, it's often a process that one goes through, that you emerge from, that takes work on our part, and yes, the help of others, too. There's nothing wrong with that.

As an aside, I was experiencing muscle pain and went to the doctor some years ago, before I was a therapist. I asked him what he thought of massage therapy. He said that his problem with massage was that you're relying on someone else to fix the problem. What he failed to realize is that when you take a pill, you're depending on hundreds, maybe thousands of other people to manufacture that drug. Of course we need each other and no one should be ashamed of that.

Anyway, one of the reasons that therapists misinterpret what's going on with clients is that everyone's body type is so wildly different (not to mention that we're filtering information through our own belief system, past experiences, perceptions, and so on). Did you know that while the majority of us are the same anatomically, there are people with additional (or less) bones or muscles, and, that nerve pathways are not always identical in humans? That is, in one person a nerve may travel through a muscle and in another it travels alongside.

Ligaments can become loose and feel as if there is a medical problem when it's just stretched ligaments. Of course, when in doubt, it's worth pointing irregularities out to the client. But just know that people have many different motivations. Like all professions in a capitalist economy, practitioners must design ways to keep clients coming back. So my advice to you: *Don't get too caught up in it.* The great thing about alternative health is that the client is in control. It's not this top-down approach where you have to follow the doctor's orders. You can decide for yourself the level of care needed.