

SET TALK

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Journey to a Successful Massage Therapy Career

I was recently talking to a group of students who were getting ready to graduate from massage school and become licensed massage therapists. The first thing I do when speaking to new therapists is ask them what interests them the most in the field of massage after having gone through their training, what they will specialize in, and in what kind of practice do they visualize themselves working? The next question is do they have a business plan in place to make it all happen? This particular group was much like most groups of graduating future massage therapists. Some were of the illusion that they could hang a shingle or get a business card and people would just flock to them. They also thought they could just do two to three sessions a day and make a lot of money. I didn't want to squash their enthusiasm or disillusion them, but after nearly 40 years in the field I have yet to see therapists be successful without putting a lot more work into their skills and practice.

The first point was that they were entering a field where there were many massage therapists competing for people who were going to spend money on massage therapy. Given this fact I shared part of my journey. In order to make a difference and to be successful I studied with the best experts I could find. This entailed traveling to San Francisco for four months to take advanced training. After seeing the fear in their eyes I let them know how lucky they were that Florida had become one of the most progressive states as far as massage education and that nearly every modality has trainings and workshops in this state.

The concept of making a difference with their clients by applying massage therapy techniques was new to some of them. Many of them had come to massage because they liked doing massage but weren't aware that it was making a difference in the people they treated. I spent a little more time sharing some case histories of some of my clients over the years whose lives had literally changed direction because of my commitment to making a difference coupled with my developing and using the best skills I could learn. This ranged from clients being able to continue working while recovering from carpal tunnel syndrome, to avoiding hip replacements from hip degeneration, to having herniated discs heal, to having 25 years of sciatic pain disappear, to TMJ and migraine headaches disappearing, to asthma attacks being less

frequent and less intense, to sports performance going to another level, to couples being able to conceive, to infants being able to avoid surgeries, to autistic children no longer being classified on the spectrum, to full recovery from concussions, just to name a few of the results I have seen over the last 40 years. At this point their attention was grabbed, not by making money, but by having a significant positive effect on people in their lives. I explained that for me this had been my driving force and it kept me going through the toughest of stretches. What also was apparent was that advanced specialized skills helped me to make a much bigger difference. At this point I had the attention of at least 2/3 of the students who suddenly were focused on the fact that they could really make a difference in people's lives.

The next point I discussed was how knowledge was so important and that there was much to learn and many skills to develop. To develop more knowledge and skills it was going to be necessary to study and read extensively. My first recommendation was to determine the clientele they wanted to work with so their studies could be directed to helping them with their specific conditions. This ranged from the elderly, to athletes, to chiropractic patients, to pregnancy massage, to infants, which basically covered the population. It became apparent that they would need to study the specific conditions that their group of potential clients would present and have a good understanding of their symptoms and underlying causes.

They also needed to look at themselves to see if they presented themselves in a professional manner so clients would take them seriously as someone who was skilled and knowledgeable. There were several in the class that looked confused at this point so I asked them "what would you like your massage therapist to look like if you were coming for treatment for whiplash injury," or "what would you like your massage therapist to look like if you were coming in for pregnancy massage?" It became obvious that many of them had never considered the importance of dressing the part to be taken seriously, but thought that just by being a licensed massage therapist people would think they were an expert and trustworthy no matter what they looked like. Obviously neatness and hygiene were at the top of the list, but also appropriate clothing for your setting and clientele needed to be considered.

I shared with them a story about when I was new in the field and met a potential client while I was playing beach volleyball. Even though I could have helped him he never came to see me. Several years later I ran into him and he mentioned he had to stop playing volleyball because of back pain. This time I was dressed in my

professional work clothes and he decided to book a session. He shared with me that when we first talked at the volleyball court he didn't take me seriously by the way I was dressed. That all changed when he saw me dressed professionally and was able to take me seriously when I explained to him how I could help his condition.

Then we started looking at appropriate skills that could treat specific conditions that the clients would present. I explained that part of what had made me successful over the years was having a complete system of treatment for the rehabilitation of physical pain and dysfunction. I discussed the core distortion that everybody is born with and explained that as people age and go through life they develop musculoskeletal issues leading to pain and degeneration due to the specific weaknesses of the core distortion. Since 95% of musculoskeletal pain relates directly to the imbalances from the core distortion a huge number of people could benefit from releasing the core distortion and bringing the body into support and balance as a result of treatment. I then had the students stand and we did structural evaluation of each one. We discussed the discomfort, pain and dysfunction they were having and how it related directly to the spiral twist of the core distortion. In addition I used kinesiology to show them other weaknesses that were present in their body that would eventually lead to even more problems based on the imbalances of the core distortion. With this information and awareness the idea of having a system that would rehabilitate 95% of musculoskeletal issues made sense and was exciting. The obvious question was how to effectively treat the core distortion.

Structural Evaluation and both applied and functional kinesiology showed that the core distortion was a full body pattern that affected approximately 50% of the muscles by reducing the strength and function dramatically. The one tool that I start all my sessions with releases the core distortion and brings the body into weight bearing support which allows the soft tissue holding patterns to start unwinding. This tool is the Cranial/Structural Core Distortion Release (CSCDR). I demonstrated the kinesiological testing and the CSCDR on one student which took about 10-15 minutes. Afterwards using kinesiology I was able to show the dramatic changes that take place as the body balances and the muscles strengthen. Structural evaluation showed a dramatic lessening of the curvature and the gain of ½" in height. This student had headaches, sciatic pain, and low back pain. Her headache was gone and her low back and sciatic pain were lessened. The soft tissue could then be released into a structure that was in balance. The goal was to achieve maximum balance and support which would produce long term relief from pain and increased strength and function.

The next important step was good deep tissue and myofascial releases that would further support the release of the old pattern, address chronically shortened tissues, normalize scar tissue, and release adhesions. At this point it was obvious a significant positive difference would be made in this client's life and the student was ready to come for more treatments.

The desire to make a difference, the ability to be taken seriously by the client, the knowledge of why the condition existed in the client's body and the skills to rehabilitate conditions using Cranial/Structural and soft tissue techniques demonstrate how to be successful in the field of massage.

Please visit our website for more information – www.StructuralEnergeticTherapy.com. You may also contact me through that site with any questions you may have.