Palpation, The Art Of Touching

With a side bar into friction*
*Massage Therapy by Salvo, Elsevier

Palpation Hints

- Make contact
  - One handed
  - Two handed
  - Fingertips
  - Close your eyes
- Work Smart
  - Visualize and Verbalize
- Be patient

Work Smart

- Less is more
  - Slow
  - Soft
  - Intention
- Rolling is for _____
- Strumming is for ______
- Movement/Stillness
Movement as a palpation skill

- Active
- Passive
- Active Resistance

Three Principles

- Move slowly
- Avoid excessive pressure
- Focus, or be present

- Practice, Practice, Practice
  - Palpation is a skill that can not be booked
  - It can only be experienced
  - The more you feel, the more you feel

The Four T's of Palpation

- Temperature
- Texture
- Tone
- Tenderness
Muscle

**Typical Skeletal Muscle**

Muscle is firm, yet pliable when relaxed.

- Skeletal muscle is striated
- Muscle fibers are directional
- Skeletal muscle can be contracted or relaxed.
- Tension in muscle tissue can also change the tissues around it

Tendon

Smooth tough and resilient

- Often cable like
- Will change tension when the muscle it is involved with contracts/relaxes

Ligament

- Connects bone to bone
- Will keep tension even throughout movements of the associated joint.

Explore Your Fascia

**Slippery, compressible**

- Superficial, deep to the skin
- Deep, surrounds muscle bellies

**Retinaculum**

- An extension, or thickening of deep fascia
- Holds down tendons
- Transverse fibers perpendicular to deeper tendons
Artery and Vein

Arteries have muscular walls, strong pulse
Veins are collapsible, faint pulse

Bursa
Fluid filled “little purses”
Often not palpable unless inflamed

Don’t Forget Your Eyes

• Vision is Palpation at a distance – Ida Rolf

Intention

• Consciously sought goal or desired end
• All other elements are dependent on intention
• Our intention can alter the result of the massage session
• Be willing to listen, feel, and respond
• Create a session that is client focused and experience led
Touch

• Medium of massage
• Powerful tool, full of meaning and intention
• Beginning and ending touch very important

Pressure and Depth

• Too much pressure can lead to muscle guarding and will lessen the effectiveness of the work
• Never apply heavy pressure on delicate or thin-tissued areas
• Observe client’s facial expressions, breathing patterns, or any other messages of discomfort for signs that too much pressure is being used

Direction

• Down and forward (effleurage)
• Inward and up (pétrissage)
• Downward, back and forth (friction)
• Direction of pressure can make the difference when locating trigger points
Friction

• Rubbing one surface over another
• Often used to increase circulation in ligaments and tendons
• Applied with palms, thumbs, fingers, or elbow
• Choice of variations ranges from general to specific and depends on intent and size of area to be treated
• The idea of friction is to Stimulate, Circulate and Separate.

Friction

• General applications include superficial warming friction, rolling and wringing
• Superficial warming friction is also called heat rub
• Rolling friction best used on extremities
• Wringing friction is applied vigorously with entire palmar surface of both hands

Friction

• Deep specific applications include cross-fiber, and circular
• Cross-fiber or deep transverse friction popularized by Dr. James Cyriax
• Circular friction is very useful around joints and other bony areas
• Promotes proper scar formation
Friction

- Techniques for deep friction include:
  - Therapist slides hands back and forth over skin or to deeper layers
  - Press down or around an area or use circular or linear reciprocating movements
  - Little or no lubricant