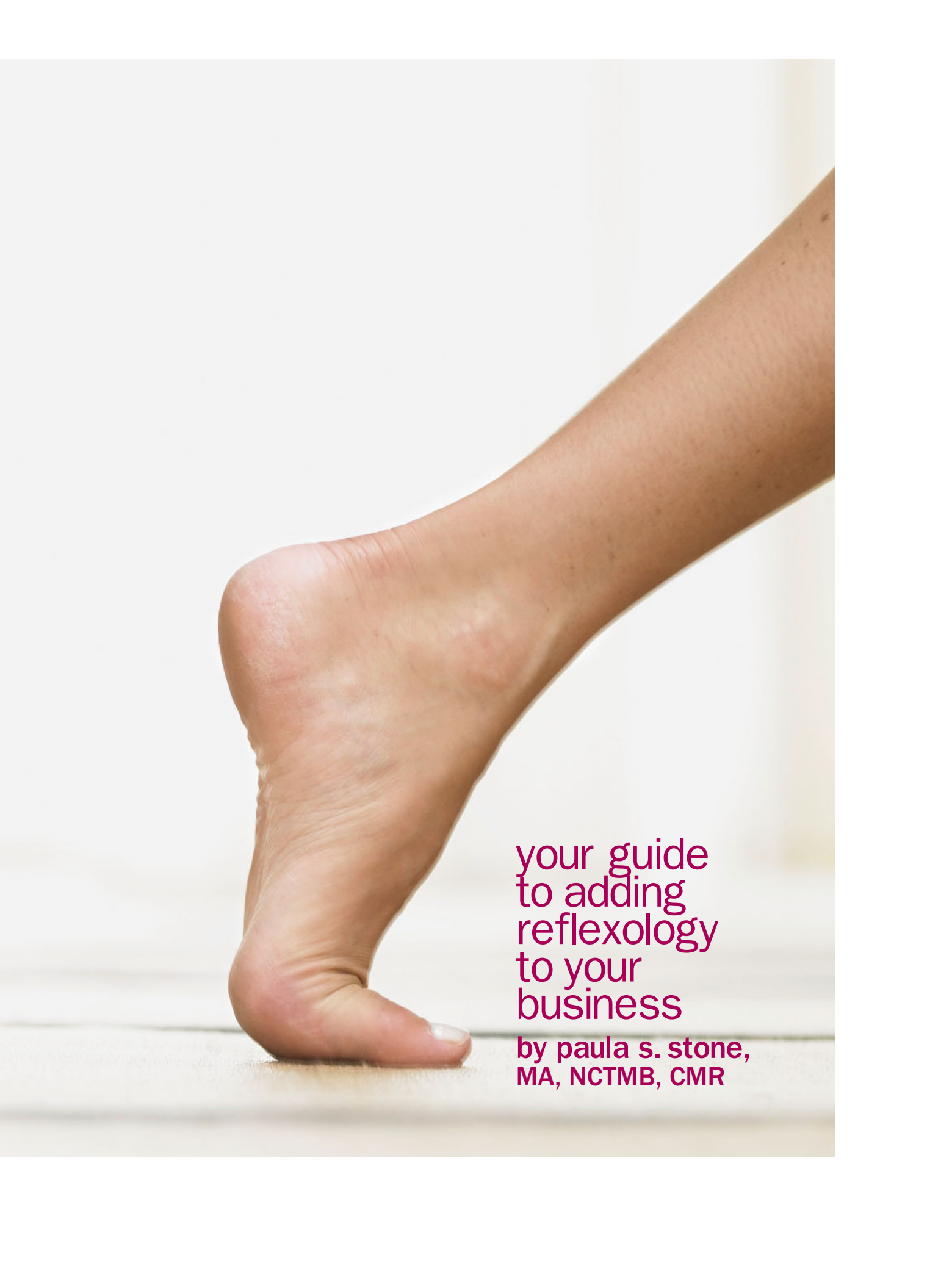




keeping
Step



your guide
to adding
reflexology
to your
business

by paula s. stone,
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a sudden fall snapped in half both ankles of retiree Wayne Zimmerman one day. Up until the fall, he had been an active man throughout his life. But reconstructive surgery, involving placing pins horizontally through his angle, sidelined him. A lengthy recovery followed. However, once freed from casts, Zimmerman faced becoming accustomed to restructured ankles and feet.

Having great difficulty walking, Zimmerman sought reflexology with massage for pain relief and improved mobility with his surgeon's blessing.

When he first came to my practice the bones in the right ankle were the size of a softball. His left ankle bones had more definition, and retained deep scarring from breaks and surgery. Both feet were flat. Impaired flexibility allowed dorsiflexion and extension of about 20 degrees.

Rotation was minimal and nerve damage limited sensation.

Today, he receives therapeutic reflexology and massage with clinical aromatherapy on a regular basis for pain relief and improved mobility of the lower extremities. The condition and comfort of both feet have improved tremendously. "I feel great after my sessions," says Zimmerman. "Reflexology with massage has definitely made a big difference in the quality of my life following the accident."

And he's not the only one. Professionally applied reflexology can be a strong adjunct therapy to massage. To practice reflexology at the clinical or therapeutic level requires dedication and zeal. Specific situations can be addressed effectively through skillful application of reflexology techniques and protocols.

DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN REFLEXOLOGY AND MASSAGE

Feet take a beating. In fact, they con-

“reflexology is a scientific method of working reflexes to balance.”

tain 26 bones, 33 joints and a network of more than 100 tendons, muscles and ligaments. According to the American Podiatric Medical Association, an average day of walking brings a force equal to several hundred tons to bear on the feet. It's easy to understand why feet are more subject to injury than any other part of the body; in fact, 75 percent of Americans experience foot problems in their lives.¹ Chances are good that you will have clients who come in seeking some extra attention for their feet.

For massage therapists, reflexology certification extends and builds the practice. In the public mind, the reflexologist is an expert in working reflexes and also the muscles, bones and ligaments of the feet and hands. New clients are opportunities to educate about the advantages and differences of massage and reflexology (see chart on page 108).

Reflexologists and massage therapists apply their skills to improve the health and well-being of their clients. The ability to explain succinctly to clients the benefits of massage and reflexology—and the differences between them—provides you and your clients with a forum for discussion and a framework for professional development. (See the sidebar “Professional Training” on page 112 to understand the qualifications to be certified in reflexology.)

Both massage and reflexology calm the nervous system and relax the body, which helps still the emotions and the mind. This is especially true when pain, a source of stress, is reduced or eliminated. Reducing stress allows the body to rest, recover and heal.

Massage benefits the immediate area worked, whether it is a specific area—hand, arm, back, leg, etc.—or the whole body. Research shows that both the immune and muscular systems can benefit from touch therapy.²

The primary objective of reflexology is to apply specific hand techniques to identifiable reflexes, which encourages the body to balance and normalize. Working a reflex in the foot, hand or ear affects the tissue of the area worked as well as the corresponding part of the body. It can provide insight into the state of the body at the moment of assessment, and this information can help you select the best approaches to benefit your clients.

For example, there are an estimated 45 controlled studies that show reflexology's various benefits, including improving circulation and flexibility and lessening muscle tension.³ The whole body is affected by skillful reflex work on the feet or hands. In fact, it has been demonstrated that reflexology can increase blood flow various organs, including the kidneys and intestines.^{4,5} Patients undergoing chemotherapy also showed a reduction in anxiety when they received reflexology foot massage.⁶

ADDING REFLEXOLOGY TO YOUR PRACTICE

There are some simple ways to incorporate it into your massage practice. Calming effects promote a deep state of relaxation and rest. Tender points and other signs of congestion identified point to the areas you can focus on in the massage. Desired outcomes of the massage are amplified.

In shiatsu massage, working the reflex points on the feet is incorporated into a traditional sequence. While some clients schedule a full reflexology session “just to try it,” others make regular appointments for health maintenance or as part of a therapeutic approach to working with a condition, such as arthritis or plantar fasciitis.

Whatever your practice, reflexology can easily combine with other therapies. In fact, it can be a practice builder.

helping athletes—a team effort

Tim Dutra, MD, president-elect of the American Academy of Podiatric Sports Medicine, often refers his clients with athletic injuries to massage therapists. “In athletic injuries, massage therapy can be very helpful,” Dutra says. “As a sports podiatrist, I use massage therapy as I do physical therapy—I refer the client with a specific prescription,” Dutra says.

But he cautions against massage or reflexology for athletes who come to massage therapists seeking relief for sports-related injuries without having seen a specialist to diagnose the problem. When in doubt, refer out.

“There may be diagnostic studies needed (x-rays, MRI, etc.),” Dutra says. He says after the athlete sees the specialist, the doctor can refer the patient to a massage therapist with a protocol with suggestions of specific areas to be worked on, frequency, duration, precautions, etc.

For accredited reflexology schools, go to www.reflexology-usa.org/reflexologyschools.htm, www.ntcb.org/accredited.htm or www.thestoneinstitute.org.



distinctions between reflexology & massage

REFLEXOLOGY

MASSAGE

OBJECTIVE

Relaxation, improve systemic function, help the body achieve homeostasis

Relaxation, pain relief and more

FOCUS

- * Reflexes — affects area(s) often far removed from the reflex worked
- * Physiologically based (function)

- * Soft tissue — affects muscle, ligaments, tendon being touched
- * Anatomically based (structure)

APPLICATION

- * Techniques applied to specific reflexes; reflexes are located in the feet, hands, ears and other parts of the body
- * Only feet, hands or ears are bare and touched.

- * Techniques applied to the whole body or problem areas
- * Clothing may or may not be removed, depending on the style of massage.

TECHNIQUES

Therapist uses small muscle movements of the thumbs and fingers to perform a variety of specific techniques, each designed to work a specific reflex most effectively.

Therapist uses large muscle movements of the hands, forearms, elbows and sometimes feet to perform a variety of specific techniques, each selected to work a system of the body most effectively. Small muscle movements of the hands may be used.

BENEFIT

- * Benefits the body systemically—organs, glands or appendages
- * Benefits areas far removed from the reflex being worked

Benefits the whole body or the area worked

Source: Paula Stone

REFLEXOLOGY AND MASSAGE

Reflexology and massage go hand-in-hand when using each modality to its best application. Reflex assessment quickly identifies areas that are congested, (i.e., an imbalance exists) and provides a way to begin the healing process. Identifying specific areas of the body eases and facilitates the massage.

This can be illustrated through a personal example. An aquatic aerobics instructor schedules one-hour reflexology/massage sessions on a regular basis for maintenance. One day, foot reflexology indicated congestion in the digestive system. I worked these reflexes thoroughly and then began the massage with a mental note to check that area. Stomach massage indicated hardness in the descending colon that was sensitive to touch.

Immediately returning to the feet I worked more deeply the reflexes for the descending colon, sigmoid flexure and other synergistic reflexes, interspersing calming relaxation techniques. In a short time, the congestion and sensitivity in the foot reflex dissolved. Returning immediately to the stomach, the tightness and discomfort were gone, and I continued the massage. The client reported feeling great.

REFLEXOLOGY AND AROMATHERAPY

It is easy to incorporate aromatherapy into the reflexology/massage session. Reflexology sessions typically begin with cleaning the feet or hands followed by a light sprinkling of corn starch to ensure a good grip. After the

session, remove the powder and follow with essential oils. (Before using essential oils, make sure you check with clients about any allergies or sensitivities they may have.) Essential oils applied to the feet and hands absorb quickly. Some essential oils can be applied directly to the skin, while others require carrier oils. Either way, therapeutic scents are pleasant and further elevate the client's reflexology experience. This can be applied directly or mixed in a carrier oil or oil blend. Selection depends on what the feet have revealed.

The National Association for Holistic Aromatherapy (www.naha.org) identifies emotional, medical and skincare benefits of aromatherapy. A quick review illustrates how aromatherapy can benefit clients suffering from myriad of ailments. The key to effectiveness is knowledgeable application of 100 percent pure clinical grade essential oils. (For more information about essential oils, read "Just the Essentials" on page 64.)

REFLEXOLOGY AND STRETCHING

Reflexology stretches include ankle rotation and lymphatic pump, among others. Toe rotations are especially helpful in assessing mobility of the metatarsals and improvement as firm compression and stretching methods loosen the metatarsal area, ankles and lower legs. This is beneficial for problems due to *underuse*, resulting from office work or aging, as well as *overuse* from sports and physical activity.

reflexology at work

For 24 years, dancing has been a part of Heather Fraelick's life. But along with that dancing has come injuries. Fraelick, now a dance teacher and a massage therapist who works in private practice and at an urban spa in Illinois, used to turn to a chiropractor for alignments to help with new pain. That was until she discovered the benefits of reflexology and massage.

"Alignment wise, I have noticed a huge benefit. It's helped with imbalances in my feet," says the 27-year-old. "Any areas of tension in my feet have opened up. I have more balance when I'm teaching and doing demonstrations."

The positive reactions she gets from clients when she massages their feet now—coupled with her own reflexology experience—has her looking to add reflexology to her own massage practice. She believes it will give her clients a more holistic experience. "When I start a massage by working on the client's feet, I often hear things like, 'Wow, I can relax now.'"

—Valerie A. Danner

CONTINUED ON PAGE 112

“reflex assessment quickly identifies areas that are congested and provides a way to begin the healing process.”

basic techniques: a massage therapist using reflexology



PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHIP WILLIAMS

1

Begin with a foot soak to soften the feet and initiate detoxification. One of the most effective and least expensive is a handful of Epsom salt and equal part of apple cider vinegar in warm water. Cleanse the feet if necessary. An easy method is to spray the feet with an antiseptic (natural products are available) and then wipe dry with a hand cloth.

2

Apply corn starch or rice powder.
(Avoid talc and baby powder.)
You may want to wear a face mask
to limit inhalation.



For more information about the history of reflexology, go to www.amtamassage.org/mtj. Click on the "Online Exclusives" link.



3

Hold the feet to establish contact. Some therapists begin assessment at this point. A convenient point to establish contact is a light touch to the solar plexis reflex.



4

Begin on the right foot to facilitate lymphatic flow. Work the chest reflex (plantar area) to ease muscle tension to further support lymphatic flow.

5

Complete on the left.

6

Finish with aromatherapy. Select aromatherapy based on the findings of the feet. A full aromatherapy assessment may be scheduled for a later time. Continue with massage.



professional training

Professional training, professional organizations, and state-to-local requirements to practice reflexology are increasing in the United States and so is public interest. The number of schools offering more in-depth training and even certification programs in reflexology is growing. If you are interested in certification, you can find a professional program at an accredited school. To find one, visit the Reflexology Association of America at www.reflexology-usa.org or the Natural Therapies Certification Board at www.ntcb.org. Expect to invest in a 200-hour program or for more advanced studies.

75%
OF AMERICANS
EXPERIENCE FOOT
PROBLEMS IN
THEIR LIVES.

Source: American Podiatric Medical Association

For example, the reflexology lymphatic pump, ankle stretch over and ankle stretch under techniques are similar to shiatsu ankle rotation. Reflexology and shiatsu techniques dorsiflex the dorsal region of the foot, while simultaneously extending the plantar region. Muscles, ligaments and tendons in the foot and lower leg stretch, promoting a sense of relaxation. Variations of these techniques gently loosen the hip joint and rock the spine. A firm hand grip along the tarsal region applies pressure to the lymphatic reflex and the shiatsu points in the tarsal region.

REFLEXOLOGY AND ACUPRESSURE

Chronic allergies and sinus conditions are common. The toes and the fingers are both well adapted to working the sinus reflexes. Sometimes the fingers are preferred due to their length and accessibility. Reflex work is easily followed up with working the sinus points on the face, head and chest. The two modalities are highly effective and often result in immediate relief. There are also simple instructions you can give to your clients for self-care.

Therapists skilled in acupressure can incorporate reflexology techniques into their practice. Similarly, a trend is for reflexologists interested in energy work to study and add acupressure as an adjunctive therapy. Tissue techniques and energy techniques overlap and are effective on several levels simultaneously. Working reflex or energy points always affects tissue to a smaller or larger degree. Massaging tissue may or may not work reflexes or energy points.

NEXT STEPS

The bodywork popularized worldwide today as reflexology finds its

historical roots in the ancient world of Egypt, India, Tibet, and China approximately 4,000 years ago. It spread to the Far East, then Europe and to the United States in the late 1800s. Today, professional reflexology associations are active around the globe.

All of this points to the universal interest and application of reflex therapy across time and culture. An understanding of the historical roots strengthens the position that reflexology is far removed from the “fad cycle.” Thorough training of skillful therapists and national certification will enhance the position reflexology and its practitioners’ hold in the health field. ■

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roadmap to health

A number of reflexology systems, each having its own map of reflexes or points, exist throughout the world today. The reflexes on the feet are perhaps the most commonly known and worked by reflexologists; however, reflex maps of the body in general and microreflex systems on the hands, ears and other locations are available.

Reflex maps from those developed as early as 2,000 BCE to those of present times, identify many reflex patterns. Some reflex points are similar on these maps while others differ, so how do you determine where to work the reflexes to achieve a predictable outcome?

With advances in anatomy and physiology, more has been learned about the precise location of reflexes and the most effective methods of working them. To achieve consistent, predictable results it is imperative to identify the precise

location of reflexes and work them effectively. Reflex maps that correlate the location of reflexes with anatomical structures are more precise and achieve the best results.

The novice often begins by looking at a chart and pressing one or more reflexes that overtly correspond to a situation. For example, work the sinus reflexes for sinus symptoms, hip reflex for hip soreness, etc. This produces a “point-and-click” approach to reflexology that addresses symptoms.

Trained reflexologists learn to think holistically and systematically. They work the primary reflex(es), helper reflexes, plus correlating zones and systems of the body. The work of skilled reflexologists extends well beyond the reflexes visible on a chart. Formal training and continuing education reinforces anatomy and physiology and polishes critical thinking skills.



For more information about reflexology, go to www.stouch.com