The integration of heated and chilled stones in massage therapy has become widely appreciated and accepted as an enduring, effective modality within the bodywork industry. This ancient form of healing has not resurfaced to replace the healing hand, but instead, is to be used as an adjunct to enhance alternative and mainstream bodywork systems. Stones can be used as extensions of the hands or as tools, depending on the client and the desired effect. Be cognizant that the essence of stone therapy—and all therapies—is elevated by the transference of authentic compassion and trust between the therapist and the client. This compassion then becomes imprinted within the matrix of each stone. Without this foundation of compassion and trust, the stones, as with any other healing tool, are rendered useless.

Incorporating this method into your practice may rejuvenate both your clients, and your business.
THE GREAT FIVE ELEMENTS

The art of stone therapy is considered a primordial and dense form of healing. According to the ancient science of Ayurveda, which is a Sanskrit word meaning “science of long life,” each human being is a unique composite of the five great elements—ether, air, fire, water and earth. All healing therapies can be connected to one of these five great elements.

Stone healing belongs to the earth element. The stones of the earth are the bones of the great earth mother Gaia. While ether’s qualities are subtle, earth’s qualities are dense. Reiki and other ether-real, gentle forms of “laying on of hands” belong to the ether and air elements.

By introducing stone work into these healing treatments, we bring in the earth element as well. Ayurveda recognizes that there are five directional flows within the body. Stone healing is most effective when the downward flow, called agni nayo in the Sanskrit language, is activated. Agni nayo belongs to the fire (mooladhara) and second (svadhisthana) chakra. Since stones belong to the earth element, they are the perfect vehicle for helping us reconnect with the earth’s grounding, stable force.

THE REIKI STONE EVOLUTION

When we combine dense and subtle forms of therapy, we create an innovative, broad-spectrum platform for healing. Reiki stone therapy integrates heated stones, which are laid in a specific sequence along the chakras, under and around the body. These stone acts to support the musculoskeletal system, calm the central nervous system, and help ground the client and the therapist. During a reiki stone treatment, the client is fully clothed and the stones are sometimes wrapped in a thin, natural cloth. Each stone is chosen for a designated place on the body, and is carefully arranged with selected reiki symbols that have an affinity for each body part. As each client is different, so the symbols will vary according to individual needs. If you already understand the reiki symbols and the chakra system as it connects to the emotions and the mind, then you can guess which stone will need what symbol. We have matched symbols with specific stones to use as a guideline. There is no right or wrong way to heal with stones because your intention transcends technique and protocol. Trust yourself first. Below are the stones used during sacred stone reiki treatment:

- Sacrum Stone: Fire Serpent Symbol
- Navel Stone: Sri-lae-ki
- Solar Plexus Stone: Tihem Master Symbol
- Posterior Heart & Solar Plexus Stones: Uui Symbol
- Anterior Heart Stone: Sri-lae-ki
- Posterior Neck Stone: Ch-o-a-ny
- Hand-held Crystals: Ch-o-a-ny
- 8 Spinal Stones: Fire Serpent Symbol

(For a picture of the symbols, see Diane Stein’s book, Essential Reiki.)

According to Meredith Sabin, RN, M.A., a reiki stone master and teacher, “Therapists need to sharpen and trust their intuition regarding stone placement and Reiki attunements.” She says, “Stone therapy enhances your connection to your intuitive self.”

The healing potential of aromatherapy is magnified by heated stone compresses and warm water. As with stone healing, aromatherapy activates the earth element within the body, according to an Eastern Indian philosophy called Vaiseshika Darsana. Consequently, these two therapies are a perfect union. Essential oils, which are added to food-grade oils or jojoba oil, are the ideal companion for hot stone massage. Jojoba oil, which is actually an ester, has a high heat threshold, which means it will not easily go rancid when exposed to light, heat and oxygen. Ancient Ayurvedic texts indocturate the use of specific oils combined with castor oil that penetrate the subcutaneous tissues of the skin and red blood cells. Consequently, using goal-specific oils with the deep pressure of heated, textured stones as they are “glided” along the body creates dramatic, profound results.

Heated stones can act as local compresses on marma points and chakras, or they can be glided along the body to increase the penetration of essential oils. Essential oils are absorbed into the lymph, and subsequently into the blood vessels and circulatory system, to finally permeate every cell in the body.

According to Merril Abramson, D.Ay., M.A., an Ayurvedic aesthetician and aromatherapist who teaches this technique, “Essential oils heighten the vibrational magnitude of the stones,” she says. “The electrical charge from the essential oil elevates the electromagnetic dynamic within the stones, thereby raising the consciousness of the aura, meridians, nadis (Sanskrit term for energetic pathways within the body) and every living cell within the body. Essential oils have stories to tell regarding their plant’s shape, size and country of origin, similar to the history of particular stones.” Abramson has discovered several external factors involving stones that enhance the benefits of aromatherapy.

- Anterior Neck Stone: Ch-o-a-ny
- Posterior Neck Stone: Ch-o-a-ny
- Pineal Stone: Tihem Master Symbol
- “Souls of Feet” Stones: Ch-o-a-ny
- Hamstring Stones: Sri-lae-ki
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ROKAROMA

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Occlusion occurs when a site is covered, much like a compress. Heated stone compresses, for example, can seal the essential oil and decrease the ability of the essential oil to volatilize. Many studies have been done on this throughout the years. In one, it was found that “Oils applied under occlusion, as with all other substances, have an enhanced effect because of the increase in the quantity absorbed, due probably to local warming, and reduced loss of molecules from the site of application through evaporation.” As evaporation is reduced, absorption may be increased” (Maibach et al., 1977).

Occlusion—Warm room, warm oils, warm hands and warm towels make for a warm body, which speeds absorption of essential oils. However, the body should not become too warm (i.e., after exercise, sauna, hot tub, because the heat from the stones permeates substances into pores of the skin at higher, faster rates and in increased amounts. Chemical substances applied to the skin will circulate within the body as free radicals or toxins searching for a place to lodge and wreak havoc. They usually end up lodging in a lughadhan, which is a Sanskrit term meaning “defective space within the body.” These defective spaces can be caused by genetic coding, past injury or emotional trauma. After many years of toxic debris accumulation within a lughadhan, disease may manifest from that space.

STONE REFLEXOLOGY
Sacred stone reflexology begins with the placement of large, aromatic, heated stones laid along, on top and underneath the body, following the chakra system. The client remains clothed, but the pants are rolled up from the bottom. Warm castor oil applied to the feet and hands helps remove excess heat within the body during thermotherapy. Oblong, flat stones are glued along the lower legs and wrists. The stones are touched around the calf muscles and swaddled with warm towels.

Textured, finger-shaped stones are best for deep tissue trigger point work on the soles of the feet. If the trigger stone is too smooth, as most basalt stones and polished crystals are, they will slip more easily and increase the risk of injury to the client. A half-moon-shaped stone is used to glide along the spinal reflex points on the arch of the foot in a downward direction following the toes. Thin, smooth, heated stones are inserted between each toe. The technique and sequence of inserting each stone is key and always begins at the big toe. There is a specialized sequence for the application of toe stones that will assist in balancing the right and left hemispheres of the brain. Toe stone applications help gently stretch the toes and open the terminal ends of the energy pathways within the body.

One of the leading practitioners of stone Thai massage is Martin Misenheimer. He studied with Jonas Westring at Kripalu; Therdchai Chumphoopong (Mac) of the College of Thai Massage Therapy in Chiang Mai; Master Pichet Boonthame in northern Thailand; and Kam Thye Chow of the Lotus Palm School, Montreal. He travels around the world performing his work at different spas and healing centers.

According to Misenheimer, shoulder stones can be especially beneficial. “The shoulder stones are very effective because most people hold stress in the traps and neck.

Dussault says, “Only after palpation is complete are the stones applied. This sequence and protocol flows smoothly and is rendered highly effective. Clients love it.”

There are certain contraindications when using the stones on the lower leg, since there are many sensitive, angular, bony structures. Use your intuition when in doubt, and ask your client for his or her feedback. Your clients will always be your best teachers.

STONE THAI MASSAGE
During the quietude and movement of applied yoga asanas, large, warm stones are laid upon the chakras and around the client’s body while heated sandbags anchor and compress other specific body parts. Gentle, rhythmic rocking, deep tissue compression, range of motion yogic stretching and herbal compresses integrate the profound effects of each of these two ancient modalities. The results: release of energy blocks, relief of stiff muscles, opening of tight points, improved circulation and assisting in restorative postures.

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According to Misenheimer, shoulder stones can be especially beneficial. “The shoulder stones are very effective because most people hold stress in the traps and neck.
Applying heat here melts tight muscles, soothing the client into gentle relaxation and preparing the upper body for deep release,” he says. Combining the art of stone healing with Thai massage is beneficial in many ways, according to Misenhimer. “The receiver feels a greater sense of safety, as if their entire being is being constantly cradled, womb-like,” he says. “This is very much in keeping with the holistic nature of Thai massage where the body is treated as a whole. The sensation of heated stones at various points on the body creates an illusion of many warm, compassionate hands. Clients feel completely pampered. This allows the receiver to go into a deeper state of relaxation sooner.”

Using some of the more ancient techniques, such as compresses, also works with Thai massage, Misenhimer adds. “Yes, I use herbal compresses; the compress begins the process of warming and calming the client,” he claims. “The stones keep that process alive as they slowly release their energy in the form of a warm pressure sensation at strategic locations along the body’s energy pathways. By relaxing tight muscles and joints, the stones act as a preparation for the pressure and stretching of Thai massage.”

STONE COMPRESSION FACTOR
Compress therapy, using stones and sandbags, has a two-fold benefit. First, the application of compression initiates the relaxation response. Then, after the compression is removed, the body experiences an amazing sense of weightlessness and an incredible lightness of being. Compression immobilizes the muscle, so there is a surrendering that must occur on the part of the client. Clients will surrender when they feel safe. When the body stops twitching and wiggling to find comfort, we can attain the inner stillness we all seek.

The most profound healing takes place in the presence of emotions, such as trust, love and compassion. According to the work of Manfred Klein, an Australian concert pianist, love is experienced, cell-to-cell, by pressure. Klein discovered this when he realized he could move his audience to tears simply by the way he applied pressure to the piano keys. It had nothing to do with the melody. He determined that love had a ratio of 1.168 based on the pressure that is made and the duration of that pressure. This ratio is known as the golden mean ratio. So, the way we apply pressure to our clients by using our hands, stones or restorative sandbags is what will create the space for the client to heal. Stone therapy is only as good as the stone therapist and the way the stone therapist interacts with the client.

Sandbags create a perfect amount of pressure and can be heated on an oil heater. They are used to help reeducate parts of

SEVEN CHAKRAS

**FIRST CHAKRA**
**PURPOSE:** Activates the downflow in the body (apana vayu). Anchors the body to the earth.

**SECOND CHAKRA**
**PURPOSE:** Activates the downflow in the body (apana vayu). Responsible for creativity.

**THIRD CHAKRA**
**PURPOSE:** The door to the soul. Cultivates love of self and others.

**FOURTH CHAKRA**
**PURPOSE:** The flower of truth, communication, writing, speech and self-expression.

**FIFTH CHAKRA**
**PURPOSE:** The flower of truth, communication, writing, speech and self-expression.

**SIXTH CHAKRA**
**PURPOSE:** The home of intuition, perception and higher knowledge.

**SEVENTH CHAKRA**
**PURPOSE:** The connection to the divine. The window for the soul to transcend.

In this photo, the author is doing lymphatic drainage, with a combination of gemstones and mineral composite stones.
Before applying heated stones to the face, Chabot applies rose quartz to the heart marma, and blue lapis to the throat chakra. (Both gemstones are unheated.)

the body that are too far forward or backward, causing misalignment. Laying sandbags on the top of the thighs will encourage the femurs to ground more deeply into the hip sockets. It also helps redirect the energy downward by simply increasing body awareness in the legs.

DEEP TISSUE BODYWORK AND SPORTS MASSAGE

Deep tissue stonework requires an enormous amount of focus to stay tuned into the texture of the client’s muscle and your client’s pain threshold. It is helpful to use one hand for manipulating the stone and the other hand in front of or behind it. This hand is called the “mother” hand. This mother hand acts to reassure, nurture and stay tuned into the tissue.

Finger-shaped stones can be anchored into the palm of the therapist’s hands and held parallel to the thumb. These stones are ideal for opening blocked marma points or releasing acute pressure points. They also can be used as an adjunct to the thumb during shiatsu treatments. The heat at the tip of the stone helps penetrate the blockages within the client and saves the therapist’s thumbs.

“Edging” is a simple deep tissue stone technique using the edge of the stone. Edging is done with one hand gently gripping the stone like a tool, which glides along the muscle sheath with deep, slow pressure for myofascial release, while the other hand acts as the mother hand. Edging can be used to follow the direction of the muscle fiber, or for cross-friction, and is an intensified, modified version of effleurage.

When the flat side of a stone is used in a continuous motion along muscles using plentiful amounts of oil and strong pressure, it is simply called gliding. Gliding is another modified version of effleurage, and in this case, the stone is used as an extension of the hand rather than a tool, which means the hands are held flat against the stone.

In addition to edging and gliding, we incorporate another technique called “flushing.” Flushing involves using the flat side of the stone as an extension of the hand. The heat, wide surface and pressure will help flush out what was dislodged from edging. Flushing in the direction toward the feet is an Ayurvedic principle, affirming omaya ways. The feet are considered one of the terminal ends of the body where excess and residual debris are stored and released into the earth.

“Cocooning” is another stone technique involving cryotherapy and thermotherapy. During cryotherapy cocooning, the use of white quartzite stones are chilled as the therapist builds a stone cocoon around an overheated, inflamed or swollen area of the body. Thermotherapy cocooning involves building a cocoon of heated stones around a site or injury that is swollen or painful from stiffness or coldness within the body. Cocoons are applied at the beginning of each treatment and removed midway for assessment and specific injury-related protocol.

The texture of the stone is crucial for deep bodywork. Basalt stones are often too smooth and spherical for deep, flat flushing or for intense edging. They are ideal for layouts supporting the neck and for light gliding on clients who are sensitive to deep massage. New England sea stones consisting of mineral composites have the most texture and the best shapes for edging. Textured sea stones are velvety smooth, not slippery smooth. They are more porous, thereby giving them a high grip factor, enabling more control.

STONE THERMAL EMANATION FACTOR

According to geological research, the term “stone thermal emanation factor” can be described as the measured length and rate of time in which a stone gives off heat. Stones are rated in terms of high, medium and low thermal rate. New England sea stones give off heat at a slow, steady rate, and have a high thermal emanation factor. These stones are various shades of gray, usually velvety smooth and can be found along any New England shoreline with high surf. Basalt stones, found along inland rivers and near dormant volcanoes, are hardened forms of lava. There are different types of basalt stones, including mafic (a dark-colored iron and magnesium-rich stone) and metamorphic (also called greenstones, although they are not green), which are mafic stones that have been subjected to high temperature and pressure to produce a change in their mineral composition.

Basalt stones can become much hotter than mineral composites, making them very popular in spas. Please be aware that these stones have a high “unpredictability factor,” dispersing heat unevenly on the stone, which can cause discomfort, or even burn your client! Pay particular attention when placing basalt stones on sensitive areas such as the abdomen, as the heat can move from the center of the stone to the periphery quickly and without notice. Due to this unpredictability factor, basalt stones score in the low to medium range on the Stone Thermal Emanation Factor Chart. Keep in mind that although basalt stones have a high burn potential, they still have wonderful healing properties. Therefore, it is best to own a mixture of many different colors and minerals in your massage stone collection.

Massage therapists and other bodyworkers will find many benefits from incorporating heated stones in their practices. In addition to the deeper levels of relaxation and variety of techniques described here, the use of heated stones may help reduce the overuse injuries many bodyworkers face. Overuse injuries are due to excessive repetition of the same movements. Merely by using your hands to grip the stone, using it as a tool or extension of the hand, the muscles in the hand become more balanced and are exposed to different movement mechanisms.

At our center, we integrate all of the above modalities into a session that lasts for approximately 75 minutes. Each session varies according to the specific needs of the client, but the common characteristic remains the same: trust and compassion between the therapist and client. The client will never feel like you have abandoned him or her while you fish around in your heating unit for stones if you practice smooth, efficient transitions, keep your stones organized in the heating unit, keep your table close to the unit, use your intuition and listen to the stones.

Stones invite a spiritual component, increase circulation and vitality, bring more energy to the session, broaden the platform for healing, decrease inflammation when cool stones are integrated, bring the client many times deeper into relaxation and greatly renew the sweetness of life. Karyn Chabot, D.Ay., LMT, is the owner of Sacred Stone Center for Holistic Education and Healing Therapies in Newport County, Rhode Island. She earned a bachelor’s degree in Alternative Health and Fitness, and is a graduate of The Ayurvedic Institute in New Mexico. She can be contacted via telephone at 877-832-1372 (toll-free), or via E-mail at karyn@sacredstonehealing.com. Readies also can visit her Web site: [www.sacredstonehealing.com](http://www.sacredstonehealing.com).

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