



Monthly Newsletter:

January 2007

This Month's Topics: The Power of Human Touch

Happy New Year! May 2007 be a wonderful year for you and your loved ones! This newsletter we thought that we would reconnect with the basics. The power of human touch. Brain research confirms the critical role of touch in our mental and emotional health. When we touch one another, a hormone is released called the nerve growth factor. This hormone is essential to neural function and learning. The brain and the skin develop from the same embryonic tissue. The skin, in essence, is the outside layer of the brain. If we want smart, happy children, we must consciously touch them. We must embrace touch for its value and function in development and learning. We must also remember that touch is not just for infants and little children. Older children and especially adolescents are oftentimes overlooked, but also benefit greatly from human touch. Here are some ideas of how and why to incorporate touch into your lives. Enjoy!

The Pleasure - and the Power - of Human Touch

by Susan Kleinman, LamasBeauty Correspondent

You don't have to be a scientist to know that being touched - by the right person, at the right time, in the right way - feels awfully good.

What scientists do know that you may not, is that human touch can actually improve your mental and physical health, lengthen your life, and even boost your career performance.

At the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami - and in labs and real-life experiments around the world - mounting evidence shows that all of us can benefit from increasing the amount of physical contact we have with friends, lovers, and family - and with professional massage therapists. Here's why:

More Touch Equals Less Stress

A number of studies have confirmed that being massaged, stroked or just held can lower stress levels dramatically. Working in conjunction with Duke University, researchers at the Touch Research Institute have found that after massage therapy, the human body secretes lower levels of the stress hormones cortisol, norepinephrine, and dopamine. These hormones not only make you feel anxious, which can be unpleasant, they can actually cause stress-related diseases - especially heart attack. Reducing their presence through massage, conversely, lowers stress hormones' ill effects.

Stroking Makes You Smarter

In a 1996 study published in the International Journal of Neuroscience, massaged subjects completed math problems in significantly less time - and with a whole lot fewer errors - than test subjects who were not massaged. Even if your math quiz days are far behind you, the brain-boosting benefits of massage can be a boon.

A Body-Rub Can Beef Up Your Bottom Line

That same study showed that massage recipients showed a profound decrease in job anxiety. And the less time you spend fretting in the office the more work you'll get done. Touching others (appropriately!) can be good for your career, as well: University studies of waitresses proved conclusively that those who touched their customers casually on the wrist or shoulder received much bigger tips than those who kept their hands to themselves. Of course, one needs to be careful in this era of sexual harassment suits - but offering a warm handshake at the start and finish of every meeting, even with your boss (or perhaps especially with your boss!) can reap real rewards.

Imagine: Immunity

In studies sponsored by the National Institute of Health, medical and nursing students who underwent massage therapy demonstrated an increased immune response in the week before their exams compared to those who did not have treatment. In other words, a massage (or hug) a day can help keep the doctor away.

Massage is Good for Marriage

Preliminary findings of a current study at the Touch Research Institute show that couples who massage each other have lower levels of sexual performance anxiety, and report increased physical intimacy. That's not news to New York-based sex therapist Mildred Witkin, who has long recommended that couples who are anxious about or dissatisfied with their sex lives soap each other up in the shower, and practice touching in a way that is not explicitly sexual to keep intimacy and playfulness alive.

A Touch Gained Means Less Pain

Of course, massage can be helpful in easing muscle spasms and cramps. But did you know that touch can also lessen pain not directly reached by the masseuse's prodding hands? Among the types of aches found to be lessened by massage are PMS and labor pains, arthritis, chronic migraines.



Massage Can Heal Other Hurts, Too

While logic might dictate that victims of rape or sexual abuse would be stressed-out by touch therapy, Touch Research Institute studies are actually showing that massage can help women who have experienced these traumas. Professional touch is also helpful in treating several psychological conditions, including anorexia and bulimia.

'Tis (Sometimes) Better to Give Than to Receive

Before you try to convince that special someone that your health and sanity depend on his massaging you day and night, note that at least one study has shown that giving a massage can sometimes be even more beneficial than receiving one. The experiment assessed the stress levels and self-esteem of senior citizens who received professional massages and of those who massaged infants. Surprise: The massagers showed even greater gains than the massage-ees. That may be partly due to seniors' particularly pronounced need to feel needed - but then again, (as your honey is sure to remind you when it's your turn to give a back-rub for a change) we all need to feel valued and appreciated by those we love.

Convinced?

If you would like to see what health benefits you might derive from bodywork but don't know a massage therapist, ask your physician or friends to recommend one who's licensed to practice in your state. Or, contact the American Massage Therapy Association at (847) 864-0123, or by e-mail: info@inet.amtmessage.org. You can also call your insurance carrier; some health plans now provide reduced rates for certain massage therapy, and have approved lists of providers.

Confounded?

You'd have a massage every day, if you could afford it. But you can't. And you'd love to spend the night conducting your own scientific research on the power of hugs, but your date-book's as bare as the racks at Bloomingdales after a blowout sale.

Fortunately, there are other ways to increase the amount of health-boosting touch you receive each week:

Brush Up: A bath brush or body brush is a wonderful way to stimulate your skin. Loofahs or brushes can help exfoliate, and provide many of the benefits of a rubdown of massage.

Moisturize head-to-toe: Using lotion of every square inch of your body guarantees all that skin will be touched and rubbed. For an added calming effect, use an aromatherapy lotion scented with lavender; for increased alertness, try rosemary-scented oil.

Say Yes To Yoga: This popular fitness trend offers many of the benefits of touch because the poses involve rubbing limb against limb. Some Iyengar yoga classes also include partnered stretches - a good way to meet your RDA of touching, too.

Take Two To Tango: Dance classes are a great way to meet new people; learn a new, calorie-burning skill - and have your hand and waist held all evening long. Contact your local YMCA or dance studio for schedules.

Source: <http://www.lamasbeauty.com/lifestyle/pleasure-power.htm>

Expressing Warmth and Affection, Helping Children Build Relationships.

Expressing warmth and affection to children is important for many reasons. It's crucial for children of all ages to be appropriately touched and hugged by adults. Touching and holding infants and toddlers helps them feel secure and learn to trust their caregivers. A positive and supportive relationship promotes brain development. By remaining calm and responsive to the child's needs, adults can reassure and calm an anxious child. Finally, these activities will help you develop a good relationship with the children, and this will help you feel good, enjoy your work, and have fun.

Here are some things you can do:

1. Greet each child warmly. Smile, make eye contact, and use a positive tone of voice that says you are happy to see the child. Use the child's name. This approach is especially important when a child has been absent or is new to a program.
2. Be friendly and affectionate with each child. Warmth and affection can be shown through your expression, laughter, voice, and words (e.g., "little one", "I am glad you are here"). It can also be expressed through touch. Leaning against a child, giving a quick gentle touch on the head, arm or shoulder, and hugging are appropriate ways to show affection through touch. Snuggling with several children while reading together is a natural and enjoyable way to do this. Show each child you care by responding individually and being sensitive to their needs. Remember to:
 - Provide regular positive attention to each child every day
 - Get on the child's level for face-to-face interactions
 - Use a pleasant, calm voice, and simple language while making eye contact
 - Provide warm, responsive physical contact
 - Listen carefully to children and encourage them to use words to express their feelings
 - Make plans to spend time alone with your young child or teen doing something s/he enjoys.
 - Mark family game nights on your calendar so the entire family can be together. Put a different family member's name under each date, and have that person choose which game will be played that evening.
 - Owning a pet can make children, especially those with chronic illnesses and disabilities, feel better by stimulating physical activity, enhancing their overall attitude, and offering constant companionship.
 - One of the best ways to familiarize your child with good food choices is to encourage him to cook with you. Let him get involved in the entire process, from planning the menus to shopping for ingredients to the actual food preparation and its serving.
3. Think about whether your joy and your good feelings about children are easy for them to see. Remember that children who act out are often those who need the most warmth and affection. Source: <http://www.healthychildcare.org/CaregiverEnews.cfm>



DO YOU HAVE MEDICALLY RELATED TRANSPORTATION NEEDS?

LPEA Round-Up Transportation Grant NOW AVAILABLE!! This grant is accessible to families experiencing financial hardship related to traveling to receive medical consultation or intervention for their child. First preference given to families eligible for San Juan Kids. Other applicants will be determined on a case by case basis. Families must reside in LPEA catchment area which includes Archuleta and La Plata counties. Contact Rachael at 385-3498 for an application!

Community Calendar and Events:

January 3ed- Parenting your Teenage Classes Begin. Barbara Bratsch will be teaching this six week course on **Wednesday's from 5:30-7pm**. Please contact Amy at the La Plata Family Center for more details 385-4747.

January 10th- FREE Children's Yoga Class for 3-7 year olds. The class begins at 3:20PM at Pediatric Associates of Durango. This yoga class occurs the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of every month through March. **Please contact Pediatric Associates of Durango to reserve your child's spot in the class 259-7337.**

January 9th – Craniosacral Therapy clinic led by **Dr. Paul Lee** will be held at Pediatric Associates of Durango from 1:30PM – 4:00PM. Children who are covered by CHP and Medicaid will be given a free session. Co-pay is the only required payment for insured patients and the remainder of the balance will be paid by your insurance company or handled by Dr. Paul Lee. Dr. Lee will be performing the therapy with his students. Please call Pediatric Associates of Durango at 970-259-7337 to schedule an appointment.

January 9th- Love and Logic parenting classes begin. This six week course begins January and continues every **Tuesday from 5:30-7pm**. Please call Amy at the La Plata Family Center for more details 385-4747.

January 10th- Couples Communication begins at the **La Plata Family Center** with Erin Youngblood, please contact Erin at 799-4686 for more details.

January 11th- Cold and Flu Season, Discussion led by Pakhi Chaudhuri, MD. at **P is for Peanut** beginning at **10:30am**.

January 24th- FREE Children's Yoga Class for 3-7 year olds. The class begins at 3:20PM at Pediatric Associates of Durango. **Please contact Pediatric Associates of Durango to reserve your child's spot in the class 259-7337.**

Pre-school story time every Wednesday and Saturday at 10:30am at the **Durango Public Library @ (970)-375-3380.**