



BENEFITS OF REFLEXOLOGY

From infants to senior citizens, reflexology can benefit people of all ages. By learning how to use its techniques, you will acquire a skill that can enable you to improve the health of yourself and others. This chapter presents research studies that support the beneficial effects of reflexology, offers advice on choosing a professional reflexologist, and provides guidance about what to expect during a professional reflexology session.

WHY DO PEOPLE USE HAND REFLEXOLOGY?

Hand reflexology is a life skill through which you can create change and improve the quality of life for yourself and others. It offers a safe, effective, and simple method of treating a variety of health problems, as well as a way of easing the stresses of daily life. Learning hand-reflexology skills gives one control over responses to health crises as well as a means of reaching out to others in time of need.

While reflexology success stories are legion (*see pages 32–33*), the opportunity to reach out and help oneself or others with its techniques is unique among health pursuits. Reflexology work provides the practitioner with the ability to help in a meaningful way. Real-life examples of reflexology use include: aiding recovery from the shock of a fall until emergency personnel arrive; helping a concerned relative to comfort a hospice patient; and alleviating chronic sinus problems that are interrupting work. Hand-reflexology skills provide a tool with which to help oneself and others.

POSITIVE STEPS WITH REFLEXOLOGY

Reflexology provides the chance to touch, ease, refresh, calm, relax, and relate. The benefits of hand reflexology are as diverse as the people who use it: from a young soccer player recovering from injury, to a jewelry maker seeking rejuvenation after a day's work, reflexology provides a resource for those who seek well-being. The clear message is that, with reflexology, you can make a difference in your health and in the health of others.

Hand reflexology is used because it is effective for a myriad of both general health and specific hand concerns. Research reveals some of the story (*see page 29*), but people in real life use reflexology to address their health concerns. A list of benefits can only begin to describe the stories. One individual wrote us to say: "You saved my life. [Thanks to reflexology] I can

now play the piano again." Another letter was from a father whose use of reflexology helped ease the pain and flare-ups of his daughter's chronic disease.

Reflexology is simple, convenient, and portable, allowing you to take positive steps toward health goals throughout the day, no matter where you are or what you are doing. It can be used at odd moments, such as waiting at a red light or watching television, so it can fit in with the busiest schedule. And each application of reflexology technique will contribute to creating a positive impact on your health.

Finally, reflexology is used because it is an activator, a means of actively pursuing health. Reflexology users are launched on a path — in an on-going participation in improving their health and well-being. Knowing that one has the ability to contribute actively provides a sense of control and confidence over responses to life's stresses.

USES & BENEFITS OF HAND REFLEXOLOGY

Addressing health problems	Creating awareness of the hand and body
Rejuvenating overused or tired hands	Maintaining health
Maintaining manual dexterity	Preventing illness
Aiding recovery from hand injury	Relaxing physically
	Easing pain

Your questions answered

Can reflexology help me with my health problem?

While many have found success with reflexology work, a number of factors are involved, including the nature of the health concern and the general state of health. It is always worth giving reflexology a try as you take positive steps to improve your health; the goal is to lower your stress sufficiently to allow your body to begin to repair itself. The relaxation that is provided by reflexology work is in itself a positive step toward improving health.

How long do I have to work before I can expect results?

How much technique is required to create change varies from person to person. After considering such issues, Chinese researchers suggested that getting results with reflexology depends on how much technique is applied, as well as its frequency, duration, and intensity. How long, how often, and how hard are the variables that can be adjusted for successful reflexology use. For example, light pressure applied frequently was found to work with the elderly, who were sensitive to reflexology work. Based on this idea, individuals with little time to spare might also benefit from short but frequent work. As you work with reflexology, incorporate it into your life so that you do enough to see results.

How can I best use reflexology?

Create reflexology opportunities at home, at work, and when you are out and about – for example, in the car or when using public transport. Use all the reflexology techniques that help to relax your hands, provide overall relaxation, and address your health or hand concerns. Experiment with a variety of mini-sequences to see which techniques work best for you. Make a before and after comparison by

A client said: “I didn’t think anything was happening [as a result of reflexology work], then I suddenly realized that I can now hang clothes on the line without pain.”

keeping track of your response to your reflexology work. Before starting, consider how your hand feels, then check whether it feels any different afterward. Does the hand you’ve worked on feel different from your other hand? Bear in mind how long any different feeling persists. Keep track of how long and how frequently you work before you feel a change.

As your reflexology work continues, you will find that it becomes second nature and you will instinctively reach for the golf ball or apply a reflexology technique in response to the snuffle of an allergy or an aching shoulder.

Can I hurt myself?

Although reflexology work is safe, awareness is important and technique application should be kept within your or your recipient’s comfort zone. Overuse can result from the application of technique that is too much, too long, or too hard. If part of the hand feels unduly sensitive to the touch following reflexology work, rest it for a few days before resuming work. Lessen the time and frequency of technique application but, if the hand is still sensitive, stop. Be aware of the potential for overuse when working with tools such as a golf ball, or foot-roller. The hard surface of a tool should be considered for its appropriateness for you before starting to use it.

ADVANTAGES OF HAND REFLEXOLOGY

Hands play a special role in our lives: from giving a simple wave to performing a complex piano piece, our hands are linked to much of what happens every day. And it is these same abilities that make hand reflexology special as well. Taking advantage of the way the hands work, hand reflexology taps easily into your reflexes and uses them to bring about a relaxation response.

The hands are particularly convenient for reflexology work. Whether you are applying reflexology to yourself or another, it is simple to reach out for a hand and apply reflexology technique. One of the clearest advantages of hand reflexology is the ease it offers of playing an active role in reducing stress levels. Because of the easy access, it is possible to apply technique more frequently, thus improving the chance of getting successful results with reflexology work.

FLEXIBILITY OF HAND REFLEXOLOGY

Working on the hand adds flexibility to reflexology work as there are many occasions when this is more convenient or comfortable for the recipient than foot work. Some people may feel more comfortable having work applied to their hands; others may have suffered a foot injury, which rules out work on the foot.

From the perspective of the person applying the reflexology work, some find hands easier to work on than feet, especially when just starting to learn: we are more familiar with the shape of the hands and with holding and touching the hands of another. There are also physical advantages to working with the hands: many reflex areas, such as those in the webbing of the hands, on the fingers, and on the palms are more accessible on the hand than on the feet.

Hand-reflexology work enhances hand awareness, helping to relax busy hands and prevent hand injury. It also makes us more aware of our hands' capabilities and limits, encouraging us to take care of them. Finally, the clear advantage of hand reflexology is that it improves the workings of the hand, helping aging hands to maintain their function, or those of the musician or keyboard worker to continue earning their living.

Hand-reflexology techniques are simple to apply, providing a convenient and effective means of promoting relaxation and addressing the health concerns of yourself and others.



Your questions answered

Which is better – hand or foot reflexology?

Although both are effective in prompting relaxation and other health benefits, foot reflexology tends to be more widely available and is considered by some people to be more effective. Because feet are usually encased in shoes, they are more protected and thus tend to be more sensitive to the application of reflexology technique. In addition, foot reflexology addresses tired feet, which is a common concern.

Others, however, find that hand reflexology works better for them. It is convenient, addresses the issue of tired or sore hands, and provides a welcome break from the repetitive stress of keyboard-using jobs. In addition, some people simply prefer having their hands worked on – and of course it is more appropriate for self-help.

Which is better: self-help reflexology work or receiving reflexology work?

The clear advantage of self-help reflexology is the convenience of working on oneself at any time, making frequency of technique application possible. Receiving reflexology from another, however, has the advantage of touch, which can promote a deeper relaxation effect.

Questions to ask yourself

There is usually a specific reason why people turn to reflexology, so make sure you know what that is in order to focus your efforts. To help, consider the following statements and see what rings true:

Are your hands tired?

Do you find yourself saying:

My hands hurt/I work with my hands all day/I am aware of the tension in my hands all the time.

Do you have a hand concern?

Do you find yourself saying:

I have had a hand operation, injury, and/or hand problem and I want to take better care of my hands.

Do you have a health concern?

Do you find yourself saying:

My shoulder is aching/My digestion bothers me/My back hurts all the time.

Are you concerned about stress?

Do you find yourself saying:

I've been stressed at home/work/I'm on a deadline and I'm looking to reduce my stress level.

Are you seeking ways to maintain your health and prevent problems?

Do you find yourself saying:

I'm interested in taking care of myself/I'd rather spend the money to reduce tension now than suffer from stress-related conditions later.

Do you like to seek out positive contributions to your well-being?

Do you find yourself saying:

I like to do good things for my health and I look for things I can add to my program.

Do you like to pamper yourself?

Do you find yourself saying:

I treat myself to these little luxuries.

Are you a fan of hand reflexology?

Do you find yourself saying:

I like having my hands worked on because I like the way they feel afterward.

Do you need a little pep-me-upper?

Do you find yourself saying:

I know I'm pushing my body but I have things to do.

REFLEXOLOGY FOR EVERYONE

Reflexology can offer a helping hand to everyone, regardless of their age, occupation, or current state of health. From the soothing touch offered to an infant, relief of stress for the keyboard worker, or a feeling of control over falls offered to the elderly, reflexology helps to meet specific health goals, maintain health and well-being, and enhance the quality of life for each and every one of us.

For both the healthy and the not-so-healthy, the reflexology experience provides a psychological comfort zone where inner thoughts can be shared and a sense of relaxation evolves with the application of the techniques.

WORKING WITH BABIES

Babies are a natural for reflexology, benefiting from a light touch. Working these tiny hands can encourage

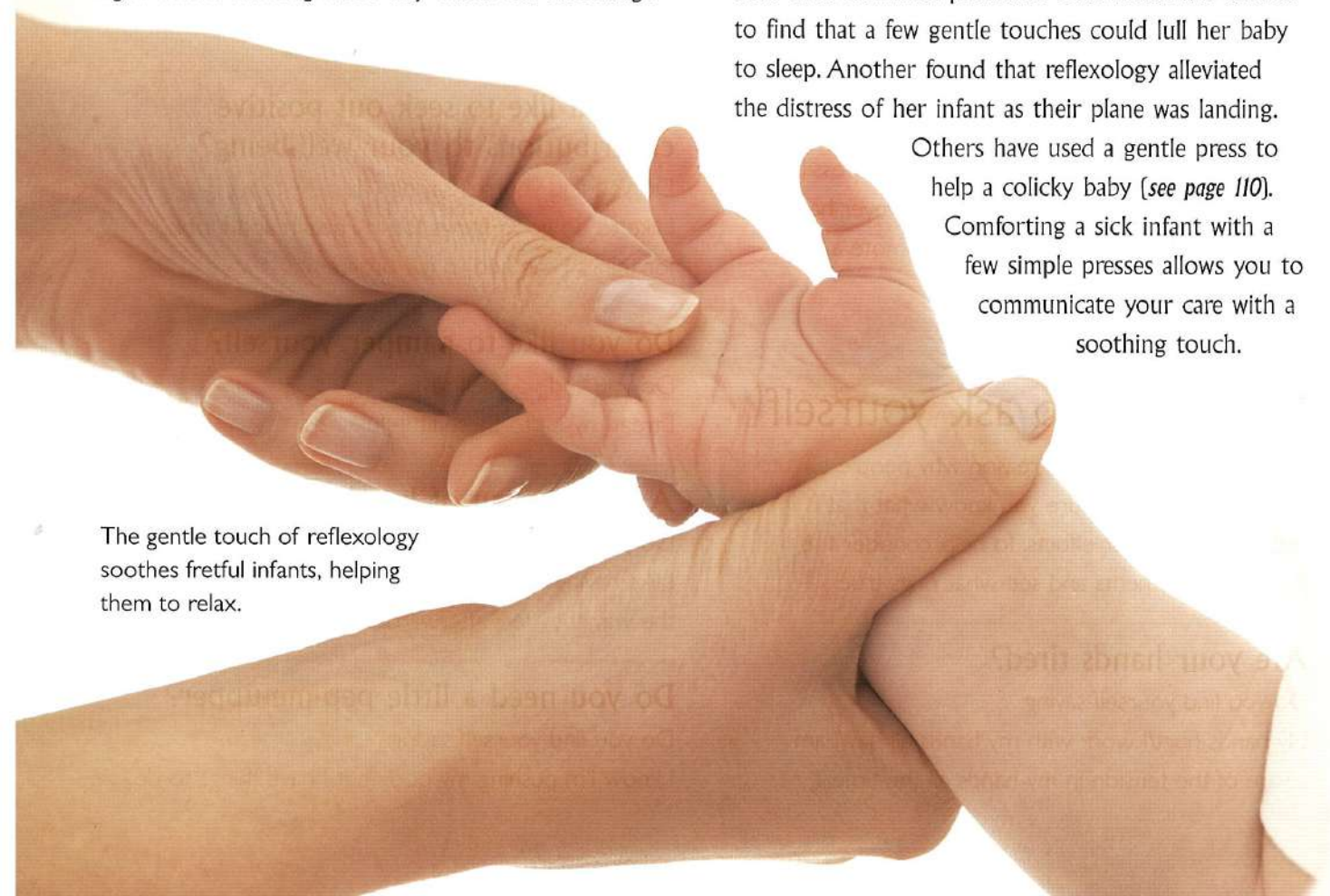
the development of nervous system pathways from the hand to the brain. While the waving of hands and feet in the newborn exhibits the beginnings of a positioning awareness, movement intelligence can be enhanced with a few gentle stimulations of the hand.

We've talked with many parents who report their delight when reflexology deals successfully with their little ones' common problems. One friend was amazed to find that a few gentle touches could lull her baby to sleep. Another found that reflexology alleviated the distress of her infant as their plane was landing.

Others have used a gentle press to help a colicky baby (*see page 110*).

Comforting a sick infant with a few simple presses allows you to communicate your care with a soothing touch.

The gentle touch of reflexology soothes fretful infants, helping them to relax.



HELPING CHILDREN

More than one parent has told us how reflexology has helped them connect with their children. A common story is that when faced with a child who can't sleep, doesn't feel good, or has a tummyache, the parents have tried a little reflexology work. Soon they find the child plopping down next to them on the couch and sticking a foot or hand in their laps any time they need comfort. As the child grows, such a scenario becomes a regular moment of quiet communication. The application of reflexology technique helps parent and child cope with life's ups and downs in a natural way, smoothing the physical transitions at different stages of development as well as stimulating the brain.

Staff at a school in London confirm this, reporting that providing reflexology services for students and their families "helps bring children closer to parents with whom they previously had little relationship."

Reflexology techniques help parent and child cope with life's ups and downs.

OLDER PEOPLE

Not only does reflexology work help ease the health concerns of the elderly, but the experience of a little touch and a listening ear can provide a highlight in their day. Research shows the positive impact on common health concerns, including decrease in pain, improved heart, kidney, and bowel function, and reduction in stress. Reflexology work also improves quality of life in issues such as having the flexibility to fasten buttons and open doors, and maintaining an independent life for as long as possible. A study of cobblestone-mat walking — an exercise popular in China, in which participants walk barefoot on a mat with a smooth, undulating, cobblestone-like surface — showed that its use improves balance when walking,



Office workers whose keyboard use results in tired, sore hands can benefit from learning a few self-help techniques. Keep a golf ball in your drawer for a simple workout.

improving stability and decreasing the likelihood of falls. Some of our favorite reflexology stories are of seniors whose reflexology work has improved both their health and that of others. For example, a retired teacher used reflexology to improve the flexibility in his fingers, then went on to help his wife who had experienced a stroke.

IN THE WORKPLACE

Reflexology plays an important role in keeping hands happy in the workplace. Feel-good dessert techniques (*see pages 60–65*) provide a respite for hands that are tired from keyboarding. Reflexology work also provides relaxation to the neck, shoulders, and arms through the application of technique to corresponding reflex areas on the hands. Such work lowers stress in the body and lessens the potential for wear and tear and even of injury. This work is important, since studies have shown a relationship between overall stress and keyboard-related hand concerns such as carpal tunnel syndrome.

TREATING ELDERLY PEOPLE

Touch is perhaps the aspect of reflexology that is most enjoyed by older people. A relaxing hand reflexology session, accompanied by a few moments of conversation, can greatly improve quality of life. As well as general relaxation techniques, you may wish to add specific techniques to address particular health concerns (see pages 120–153). For example, to address sluggish digestive processes, apply the thumb-walking technique to the colon reflex area (see pages 72–73).



The finger-pull (see page 63) promotes relaxation and improves flexibility, so start the session by gently applying this dessert to each finger and thumb in turn. Be careful to stay within the client's comfort zone.



End the session with the squeeze (see page 65), which uses gentle pressure to relax the whole hand. Gently and firmly squeeze the hand several times, repositioning and then repeating along the length of the hand.

PREGNANT WOMEN

Research shows what many have already discovered for themselves: reflexology work helps women to have easier pregnancies, quicker and less painful deliveries, and more success with breastfeeding their infants. As the body changes throughout pregnancy, reflexology work helps with common concerns such as backache, aching neck, swollen feet, and nausea.

The stress of pregnancy and delivery may not end with the birth. Post-partum depression is a reality for some women. A friend who recognized the signs of unhappiness in her niece after she gave birth utilized her reflexology skills as well as an understanding ear to help the new mother through a difficult time.

PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

Touch is frequently an element missing in the lives of people with physical disabilities, so reflexology's hands-on communication can bring a particularly valuable type of comfort. In addition, reflexology helps interrupt stress, lessening energy demands for handicapped individuals who expend 30 percent more energy in the tasks they perform throughout the day. Most of all,

reflexology provides the possibility for improved quality of life for those with physical disabilities. Our friend Alice, for example, worried that doctors' predictions would be borne out – that her daughter would never live independently following a car crash that resulted in paralysis and head injury. The concerned mother learned reflexology and began work on her daughter, who eventually returned to her career as a teacher, and to independent living.

THOSE WITH SERIOUS ILLNESS

Reflexology work gives one the ability to connect with those suffering from a serious illness, injury, or surgery. With reflexology skills, visitors can also be caregivers when their loved ones are in hospital. Instead of sitting around feeling useless, you can be helping. With the gift of touch in your reflexology work, you can demonstrate to the recipient how much you care. Applying a few hand desserts or techniques to a patient in hospital does more than flowers or candy ever can. As one study found, patients who received reflexology from their relatives felt less abandoned and the family members felt satisfied that they could aid the loved one.

REFLEXOLOGY RESEARCH

Research supports the beneficial uses of reflexology work: studies show that reflexology techniques affect the body, helping it to function better, easing pain, and hastening recovery from illness. In addition, researchers have established plausible reasons to explain these effects. In studies around the world, researchers have demonstrated the potential of reflexology for improving quality of life.

Researchers in Israel found that reflexology achieves positive results in multiple sclerosis patients, alleviating motor, sensory, and urinary symptoms (2003). American researchers discovered reflexology to be an “effective, inexpensive, low-risk, flexible, and easily applied strategy for post-operative pain management” (2005).

Also in the US, researchers working with hospitalized breast cancer patients found reflexology to be successful in the management of pain, nausea, and anxiety (2000).

Another study of patients with breast cancer reported positive results in alleviating pain and anxiety, finding too that reflexology offers a “simple technique for human touch which can be performed anywhere, requires no special equipment, is non-invasive, and does not interfere with patients’ privacy.”

Quality of life improved for senior citizens using a reflexology cobblestone mat. Researchers found that reflexology helped seniors in “promoting and maintaining functional mobility and overall health status” (US, 2003, 2005).

In addition, research provides evidence that reflexology work can create a physical response of choice. In a study by researchers in Austria, reflexology work on the kidney reflex area was found to affect blood flow to the kidneys (1999). A further study by those researchers (2001) showed increased blood flow to the intestines following reflexology work applied to

Research demonstrates that reflexology work can create a physical response on specific organs of the body.

the corresponding reflex area. A researcher in India who found that reflexology reduced post-surgical pain theorized that the pressure signal of reflexology technique application successfully blocked out pain signals, thus alleviating pain (2006).

EXPLAINING REFLEXOLOGY

These studies may explain why reflexology works. The improvement in blood flow to the kidneys noted above could explain why other studies found that treatment for kidney stones proceeds more quickly with reflexology work (1996). Similarly, improved blood flow to the intestines could explain why reflexology work was found to ease constipation (China, 1994).

In Singapore, researchers tracking reflexology work with an EEG test found that it triggers the same brain-wave pattern as is found in those resting in a deeply relaxed state (2005). Further studies show that reflexology prompts normalization of the body’s organs. A British study (1997) and a study in Singapore (2005) both demonstrate improvement on heart function.

REFLEXOLOGY IN MEDICAL CARE

Research studies demonstrating the efficacy of reflexology work have led to its adoption in medical care, where it is proving to be a valuable adjunct to standard practice. Patients in hospices, those receiving treatment for cancer and other life-threatening illnesses, the elderly, and pregnant women have all found their quality of life enhanced by the application of reflexology work.

With growing research evidence of the benefits of reflexology work in medical care, and with so many patients themselves requesting this service, medical establishments are increasingly making reflexology treatment available to patients.

PROVISION OF SERVICES

Studies demonstrating that reflexology eases nausea, vomiting, and fatigue in breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy has prompted the addition of reflexology services at many facilities, including the M. D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas. Hospices across the United Kingdom now utilize reflexology as a way of helping to provide patients and their families with more dignity, choice, and control.

Hospices are using reflexology to provide dignity, choice, and control for patients and families.

Reflexology work in such settings helps to improve a patient's quality of life, offering practical ways of coping with life-threatening illness, providing comfort, and enhancing both the patient's and the carer's sense of emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. An audit of all hospices in Scotland found that half of these establishments provide reflexology services, with

respondents in the study reporting an improved quality of life, through a reduction in both physical and emotional symptoms. Also in Scotland, community nurses are now using reflexology to manage fecal incontinence and constipation in children.

In Eire, at the National Maternity Hospital in Dublin, reflexology is being used to ease the experiences of pregnancy and birthing, as well as for treating pre- and post-natal depression and gynecological conditions such as endometriosis and premenstrual tension (PMS).

In the United States, many medical, nursing, and pharmacy schools are incorporating the study of complementary medicine, reflexology, and other therapies into their curriculum. For example, the University of Pennsylvania's Presbyterian Medical Center in Philadelphia plans to train medical staff to develop personalized therapy plans that include reflexology, with

USES OF REFLEXOLOGY IN MEDICAL CARE

Researchers have demonstrated that reflexology can play a valuable role in medical care, easing symptoms, relieving pain, and enhancing quality of life:

Pain relief and improved quality of life for the elderly.

Relief of symptoms for patients undergoing chemotherapy.

Palliative care for hospice patients.

Quality of life for those diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

the goal of decreasing patient stress, pain, and anxiety. Reflexology services are already being provided at clinics associated with medical schools, such as the Outpatient Services at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center for Integrative Medicine.

SELF-CARE STRATEGY

The application of reflexology as a self-care strategy has been suggested by researchers both for individuals seeking to alleviate their own symptoms and for family members wishing to help and comfort their loved ones. Researchers working with the elderly found reflexology to be efficacious and suggest that it be used “to develop simple, convenient, and readily accessible exercise programs that will reduce health problems and improve the quality of life of the aging population” (US, 2003).

Use of reflexology as a form of self-care provides a means for family, friends, and individuals themselves to improve quality of life while undergoing medical treatment. Everyone is familiar with the comfort bestowed by the touch of a reassuring hand.

Reflexology provides such an opportunity, but much more as well. For

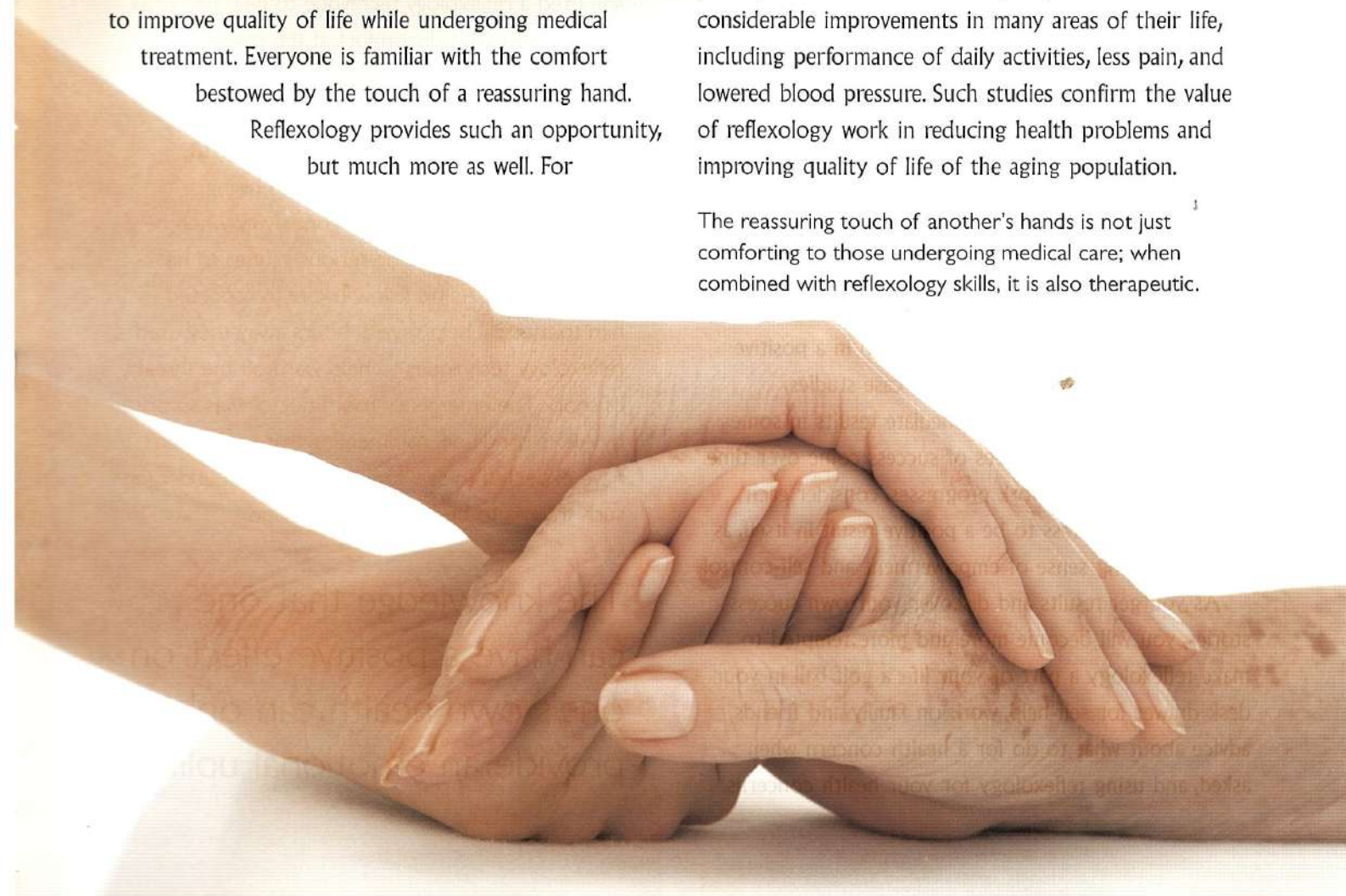
Reflexology can reduce health problems and improve quality of life of the aging population.

example, reaching out to pat a hand after surgery is a natural response, but giving a hand rub may do more, easing pain as well as giving comfort (Korea, 2004). Similarly, a study of people diagnosed with multiple sclerosis – a disease for which medicine has few answers – found that using reflexology improved quality of life (Israel, 2003).

HELPING THE ELDERLY

In the United States, researchers from the Oregon Research Institute (2003, 2005) studied the effects of reflexology cobblestone-mat walking by elderly participants and found that they experienced considerable improvements in many areas of their life, including performance of daily activities, less pain, and lowered blood pressure. Such studies confirm the value of reflexology work in reducing health problems and improving quality of life of the aging population.

The reassuring touch of another's hands is not just comforting to those undergoing medical care; when combined with reflexology skills, it is also therapeutic.



SUCCESS STORIES

Any reflexology enthusiast can tell you his or her favorite success story – but the bottom line is always the same: aid, comfort, and support was provided by reflexology work. These stories illustrate why reflexology has become such an important part of many people's lives.

When you read these short case studies, you will get some idea of how reflexology can enrich your life and that of others. Why not put yourself in a position to experience the successful use of reflexology? Use the techniques on yourself in order to become familiar with the reflex areas, their use, and the proper application of techniques. Try it on others who are interested. Find a reflexology buddy so you, too, can be on the receiving end of reflexology work. Or consider treating yourself to professional reflexology services.

DEVELOPING YOUR SKILLS

Each piece of reflexology work is a step in a positive direction. As you can see from the case studies, reflexology work produces immediate results in some situations; in others, degrees of success come over time. As your reflexology work progresses, consider each interruption of stress to be a positive result in itself, as is the rewarding sense of empowerment and self-control.

As you get results and discover your own success stories, you will become more and more tempted to make reflexology a part of your life: a golf ball in your desk drawer for self-help, work on family and friends, advice about what to do for a health concern when asked, and using reflexology for your health concerns.

Case studies

Combating workplace pollution

Sally had breathing difficulties following years of exposure to chemicals and aerosols in the course of her work as a cosmetologist. Looking for respite, she sought reflexology services. Her breathing eased and, over time, the problem was eliminated.

Getting results

Our niece was being wheeled into the delivery room when she suddenly realized that she did not have her golf ball to hand. Since she had found that using a golf-ball technique had helped relieve some problems during pregnancy, she asked a nurse to bring the ball to her. The staff were surprised at the ease of her delivery. Later, on a plane trip, when her infant son was fussing as the plane came in to land, she used a reflexology technique to help him relax and overcome his discomfort at the change in altitude and pressure.

Averting shock following trauma

Our friend Alex's eagerly anticipated hiking experience in the forest had gone awry when he fell down a cliff, sustaining serious injuries to his legs and pelvis. As his fellow-hikers transported him to medical help several hours away, they used reflexology techniques to help ward off the threat of shock. The emergency-room doctor was surprised by Alex's condition, commenting that he wouldn't have expected to see someone who had undergone such trauma to be in such good shape.

The knowledge that one can have a positive effect on one's own health can only provide an emotional uplift.

Improve quality of life

A client, suffering from partial paralysis as a result of a debilitating illness, had one request — that he regain use of his hand sufficiently to use the remote control for the television. He explained that, because of his condition, watching television was his main source of entertainment. Reflexology work helped make it possible for him to use the remote again.

Touch

Another client, a retired professional, would come to her reflexology appointments wearing her mink jacket, even bringing a special hanger for it. She did not have any physical complaints but seemed to relish the attention and contact.

Sally found that her breathing difficulties, caused by workplace pollution, eased and the problem was eliminated.

Recovery

Recovery from a life-threatening condition had left client Bob depleted, discouraged, and dependent on expensive medication. As his reflexology work progressed, his color improved, he reported feeling better, his medication was withdrawn by the doctor, and he now reports feeling good.

Eating anxieties

Client Ann sought help from reflexology for her eating disorder. Even advice from experts had failed to help her anxiety about food. What did help was the relaxing effect of reflexology work. As the work progressed, her anxiety at the dinner table diminished, her body awareness improved, as did her eating habits.

Doctors were surprised to see our friend Alex in such good shape following a cliff fall and lengthy delay in getting medical help. Colleagues had used reflexology techniques to ward off the possibility of shock.

Relieving asthma

Katharine's asthma attacks were no longer being relieved by the medication that she had taken for years, and her attacks were increasingly waking her in the night as she struggled to breathe. We showed Katharine how to apply a self-help technique to the adrenal gland reflex area. She was delighted to discover that by putting this technique into practice, she was able to control her asthma attacks and breathe freely.

Easing tired feet

Maria's work as a waitress in a busy restaurant meant that she was on her feet for hours on end each day. The stress on her body was manifesting itself not just in tired feet, but also in headaches, backache, and general fatigue. Reflexology sessions have not only eased Maria's immediate symptoms, but shown her that by obtaining total relaxation, her general health and well-being are significantly improved. She has also learned self-help techniques that she can put into practice throughout the day, whenever she finds a spare moment.

Applying a self-help reflexology technique helped Katharine deal with asthma attacks when medication no longer worked.

VISITING A REFLEXOLOGIST

When you visit a professional reflexologist, you should expect to receive the same professional attitude as with any other healthcare professional. After a few preliminary questions, you may be seated on a reclining chair or massage table. For work on the feet, you will have to remove your shoes and socks, but will be offered a towel or blanket to cover bare legs.

A reflexology session can last from 30 minutes to an hour in length. A professional reflexologist will apply technique to the whole hand in a systematic manner, with additional emphasis on reflex areas that correspond to your specific health and hand concerns. Desserts or “feel-good” techniques will also be applied. The pressure should be within your comfort level: if it hurts at all, it should “hurt good” and not seem threatening in any way. If you feel any discomfort, ask the reflexologist to lighten pressure or to stop work on that area.

DURING THE SESSION

Expect a professional reflexologist to apply sufficient and appropriate technique to give you a sense of relaxation. He or she will also give you feedback during the session

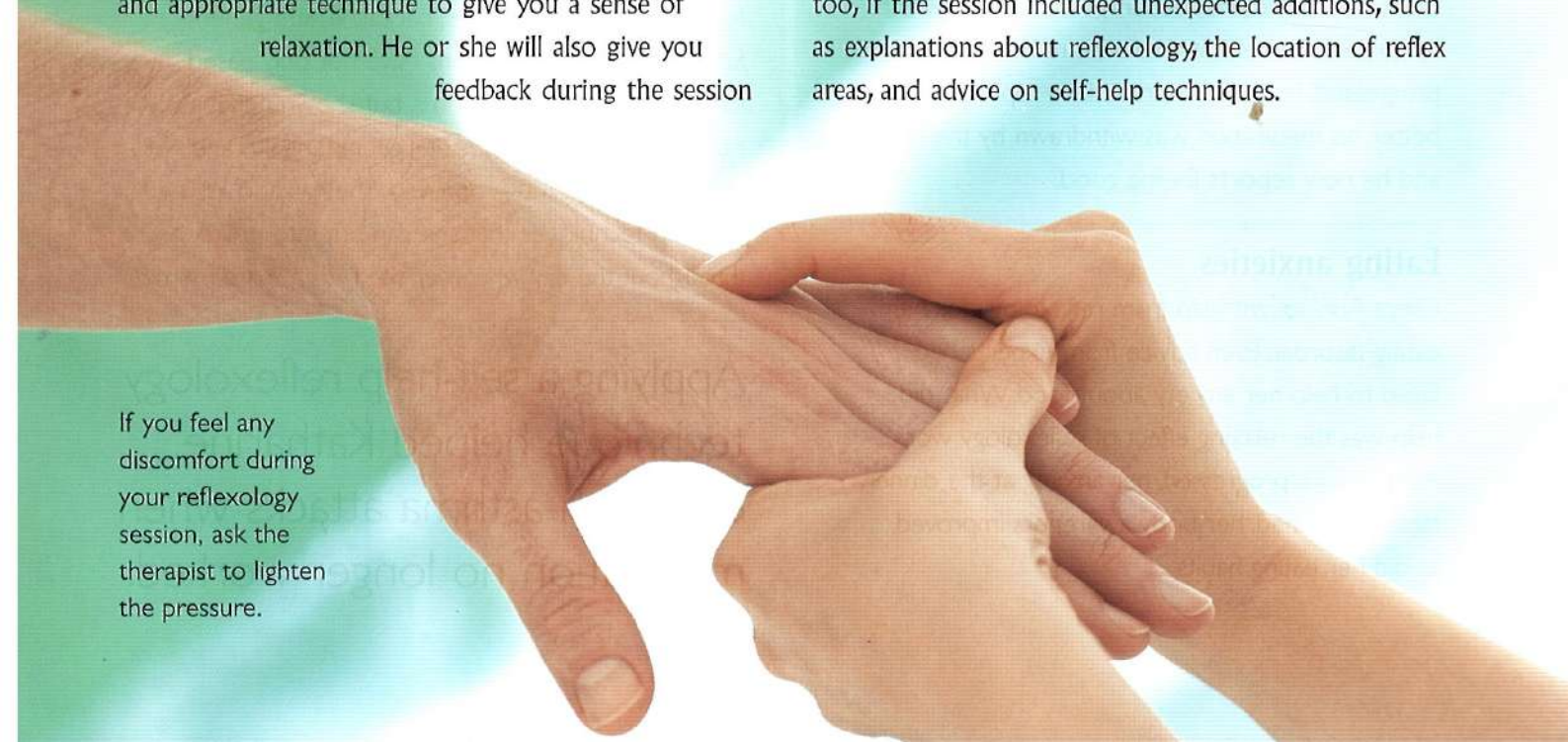
as they assess different reflex areas. The reflexologist, in turn, should listen to your concerns, paying attention to your likes and dislikes and to your comments on your experience of the session.

EVALUATING YOUR EXPERIENCE

Assess results during and after the session. When work is complete on one hand, ask for a moment to reflect. Flex your hands, noticing whether or not there is a feeling of relaxation in that hand as well as a difference in feeling between the two hands.

After completion of the session, consider whether or not you feel an overall sense of relaxation. Consider, too, if the session included unexpected additions, such as explanations about reflexology, the location of reflex areas, and advice on self-help techniques.

If you feel any discomfort during your reflexology session, ask the therapist to lighten the pressure.



Your questions answered

When choosing a reflexologist

In seeking a skilled reflexologist, consider the reflexologist's ability to get results for you. Reflexology work involves unique abilities: proficiency is created by the sum total of the reflexologist's experience and skills, so look for a reflexologist who has had sufficient hands-on experience to master technique skills. Check also that he or she has worked successfully with health and hand concerns.

Every profession has its enthusiasts, individuals who are immersed in the work they do. If you find such a reflexologist, you may have found someone whose passion for the field is fueled by results.

When you start looking for a reflexologist, ask around for the name of a practitioner with a reputation for getting results. Try a sample session to see if their's is a technique application you like, to see if it fits with what you're looking for. Ask them questions to ascertain their proficiency.

When opting for a reflexology session, stay aware of your own tastes and keep in mind the reasons why you decided to seek reflexology work. Whether it is tired hands, a health concern, or some other reason, make your interests known to the reflexologist to ensure that you receive the appropriate treatment.

Evaluate your reflexology session both during and afterward: does the hand that has been worked on feel any different? Did you feel an overall sense of relaxation at the end of the session?

Questions to ask the reflexologist

When you call to make the appointment, ask for clarification about fees, forms of payment, and the length of sessions. Ask about the reflexologist's experience and training. You will want to know how many years he or she has been practicing. Also, you will also want to know that the reflexologist has completed a proper course of study in reflexology.

Do you provide other services or sell products?

If the answer is yes, you will have to consider how much of this individual's professional practice is devoted to the application of reflexology. If he or she is only a part-time reflexologist, it does raise a concern as to whether his or her experience and focus are sufficient to achieve results for you.

What kind of services do you provide?

Ask the reflexologist about the nature of his or her services, and whether he or she works on hands or feet. Some reflexologists are not educated or experienced in hand reflexology. Ask also whether he or she offers sessions using cream, oil, or lotion: the question is whether the practitioner is providing reflexology or massage services. You should look for the service that matches what you are comfortable with and what is effective for you.

How many sessions do I need in order to see results?

You should feel that your hand is relaxed as soon as work on it is completed, and by the end of a session, you should feel generally relaxed. After two or three sessions, you should start seeing results, such as easing of a particular health concern – but remember that the longer you have had a problem, the longer it will take to see results.