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Lotus Palm Thai Yoga Massage Off-The-Table Bodywork

by Marvin Swartz



Traditional Thai Massage can be traced back 2,500 years to India. The founding father was Jivaka Kumar Bhaccha, a celebrated yogi and Ayurvedic doctor. Most Eastern healing art traditions are derived from the philosophy that all forms of life in the universe are animated by an essential life force. In the Indian yoga tradition this energy is called “prana,” an invisible, silent, formless force that is present in everything. It circulates along a pathway, forming a network of vital life force, essential to the human system. In the Thai tradition, there are ten important lines. These lines are connected to acupuncture points, and massaging them promotes the free flow of energy. In this way, Thai Yoga Massage supports the body’s natural healing processes.

The Lotus Palm School of Thai Yoga Massage, located in Montreal, Quebec, was established by Kam Thye Chow, an internationally recognized teacher and practitioner. Originally from Malaysia, he has integrated the traditional Thai methods with the Western approach to body, mind, and spirit. As a fusion of yoga, massage, meditation, and Ayurveda, the result is a complete holistic bodywork session adapted to an individual’s health status and their physical limitations.

This unique style of massage is performed on a mat on the floor, fully clothed, and without the use of oils. A practitioner uses one’s hands, feet, arms, legs, and body weight, to compress and knead muscle tissues. At times, the client is positioned in supported yoga postures while their muscles are manipulated, sometimes with directed breathwork. Rocking movements and flowing transitions from one posture to another, meditative awareness, the proper use of breath, and fluid Tai Chi Chuan movements create a flowing dance that benefits both the recipient and practitioner.

The distinguishing feature of Thai Yoga Massage lies in its approach to gently stretch and open the body. This increases joint mobility and flexibility, therefore providing a greater range of motion. As muscular tension is slowly released, blood and energy can flow more easily to the cells, tissues, and organs. As well, the lymph system is stimulated supporting the body’s natural detoxification process and assisting its immune response. The free-flow of energy has positive effects both physically and psychologically. Stress-related conditions, such as stiff neck and shoulders, lower back pains, headaches, and digestive difficulties, may be effectively treated. Thai Yoga Massage also generates a deep state of relaxation and well-being.

Lotus Palm methodology emphasizes centering, transition, balance, and safety. The lotus flower is a symbol of loving-kindness and compassion, while “palming” is a technique used in massage. The “compassionate touch” is the spirit of this method. One must also be mindful of the moment, focussing on the recipient’s needs during the massage. This moment to moment meditative dance is integral to establishing a sacred healing space during the massage.

The roots of Thai Yoga Bodywork are based on the Indian traditional healing method of Ayurveda, with “ayur,” meaning life, and “veda,” meaning knowledge. These concepts together form the art of harmonious living. Within Thailand much of the practice of Ayurvedic medicine has been reduced to pharmaceutical purposes. In the Lotus Palm method we can combine the practice of Thai Yoga Massage with its ancient Ayurvedic roots.

In Ayurveda, a Dosha is the collective physical, mental, and psychological aspects of an individual. There are three Doshas—Vata, Pitta, Kapha—which vary in strength within us and which can fluctuate over time. In theory, an imbalance of the dosha bodies may be manifested as disease or emotional problems. By selecting

appropriate yoga postures and applying proper pressure and tempo during a massage, rebalancing the body's doshas is possible.

What to Expect

Certain medical conditions may require a doctor's consent. Prior to the first massage a health questionnaire, flexibility assessment, and consent form are completed. Practitioners in this technique of yoga bodywork are trained to be sensitive to each person's body and aware of one's limitations and boundaries throughout the session.

A typical session lasts two hours. Wear a t-shirt, sweat pants/tights, and socks. Although there may be areas of tension in the body, you should not feel any physical pain or emotional uneasiness during a bodywork session. Safety in all movements is integral to the technique. If, however, you do experience discomfort, speak up at any point and inform your practitioner. They will then either adjust their movements to ease your discomfort or find some manner in which to address the issue.

There can be an emotional release during or after a session. Bodywork does affect the nervous system and many memories and experiences are held in the body, everything from daily stresses to larger emotional issues and traumas. The best approach is to allow such feelings to surface. If they are coming out it is because it is the proper time for them to do so.

After a massage some people feel very energized while others may feel extremely relaxed. It is important to take some time for yourself after a session to allow yourself to fully integrate the experience. It is also important to drink lots of water after a session as Thai Yoga Massage is very deep work. Water helps eliminate the waste cellular constituents which have been released and encourages the circulation of vital energy within the body.

Making Thai Yoga Massage a part of your regular health regimen is a very good preventive strategy, helping to fortify and rebalance your body and maintain vitality.

Marvin Swartz, a certified Lotus Palm Thai Massage Practitioner in Saskatoon, is currently the only Lotus Palm certified graduate in Saskatchewan. To book an appointment please call (306) 249-1073 and see the display ad on this page for more information. Please note: Thai massage is not currently covered under medical insurance plans. Check out: www.lotuspalm.com for additional information on Thai Yoga Massage.

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