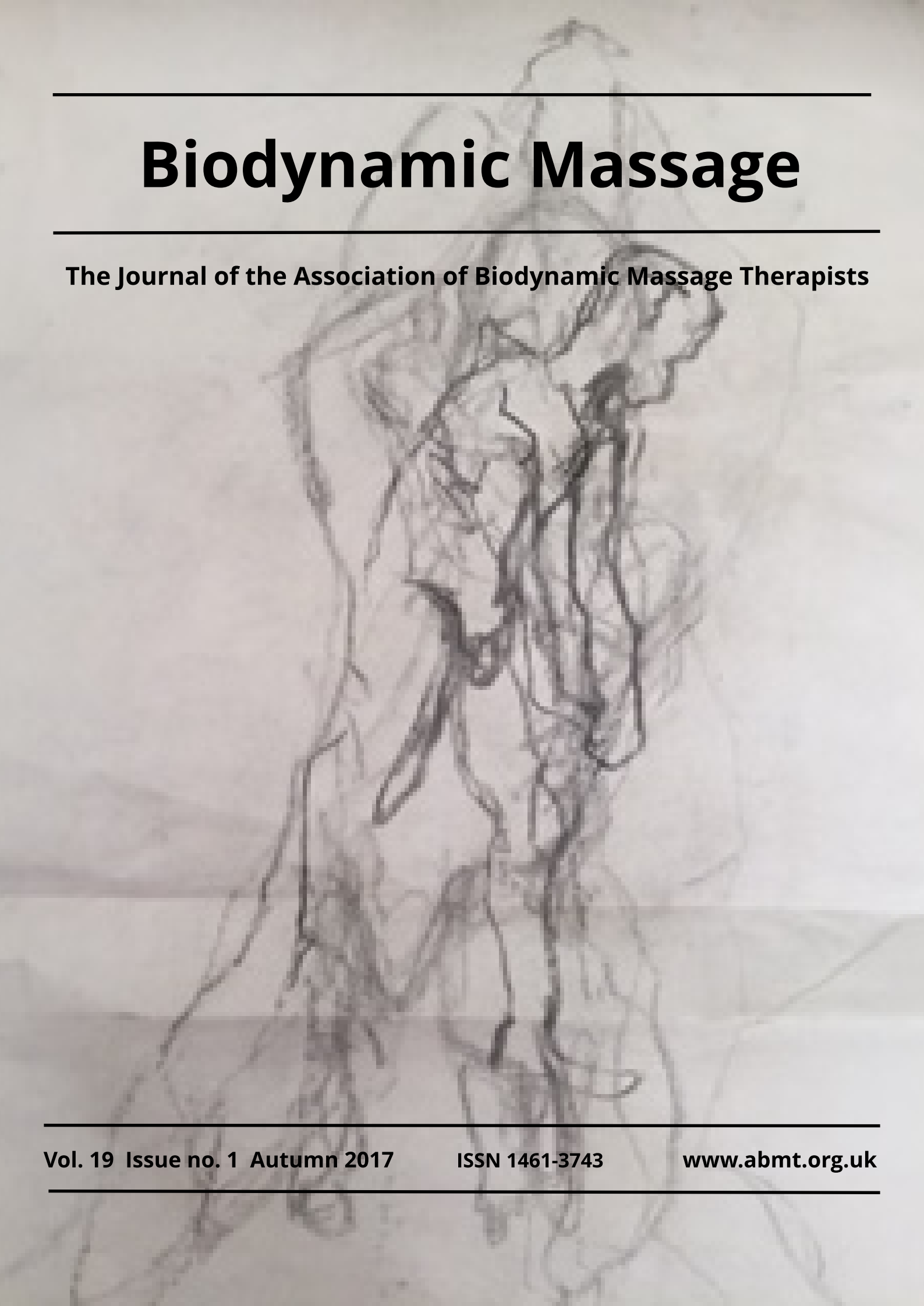
Biodynamic Massage

The Journal of the Association of Biodynamic Massage Therapists



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Front cover artwork: Amy Barnes

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the ABMT Journal. The intention of this edition has been to answer some of the questions that arose from the theme of 'how do we support the practice?' both on an organisational level and an individual one.

In this edition you fill find both reflective and practical pieces.

Amy Barnes writes about her continuing exploration in giving the body a voice and how this informs her massage practice.

We have an extremely helpful and practical article from Kate Codrington about how to make your website standout in this very crowded marketplace.

Lindsey Nicholas feeds back the results of the ABMT survey and asks pertinent questions about how we can support each other as practitioners.

Charlotte Beaumont shares some thoughts about the recent 2nd Congress of the International Association for the Study of Affective Touch and Hilary Price reflects on the important and essential benefits of supervision for practitioners.

Finally one of the questions that I was asked by a member, was how do we do self-care in the midst of the daily busyness, setting up a practice, trying to get clients and look after the clients we have - how do we take care of ourselves? The question is a big one, and whilst I don't have the complete answer I take inspiration from my peer Anita Jasser . She shares with us directly from her Instagram page, some of her thoughts and how she does her own self-care.

From conferences, to art classes, to websites and supervision it is encouraging to note that as practitioners we are not just in the world without a support system and nothing to hold onto. There are many resources including this journal and I hope that as practioners this edition can support and encourage you to find your voice about what you do and how you do it.

I am particulaly grateful to all the authors for the depth of their work and their willingness to share it with all of us.

Rebecca Warner-Hodgkin

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR
LINDSEY NICHOLAS

Reading the articles for this edition of the journal I was moved by the desire in our writers to share their heart-felt and dedicated reflections on practice based, for many of you, on years of hard-won experience and effort. It underlined for me my hope, as Chair of this organisation, to support what is already there in you and to strengthen connectivity within the Association so that your gifts can support us all.

Over the past year, at a national level, there has been an on-going debate about our sense of national identity and where are boundaries lie. At the same time, I sense a powerful yearning for feeling and connectedness which seems to be operating at a level of tension with this need for control and separation. It's obvious, to me at least, to see the psychological parallels here and I feel that as biodynamic practitioners working with the body, we are very much with the primary expression of this national tension through our contact with the body's emotional defence systems.

From my own perspective, 2017 has marked my first sustained attempts to make professional connections with clients and the public; I have established my own biodynamic practice. This has been a major shift for me. At the same time through my work for the Association I have made forays into new social media, to communicate with both the biodynamic community and the wider public. The strands to my connectivity have been many, varied and interwoven and I have no idea what impact all this has had on the wider world!

But the process has changed me enormously. It has certainly prised me out of my usual, default, introspective sense of isolation towards a warmer, more inclusive and strengthened place within the milieu of human life. Of course, it has also challenged my own sense of boundaries.

I am always delighted to make contact with members, and I hope this journal, as well as our event on 11th November to support new practice, will provide even more energy to growing and nurturing our community and the important work we do.

I also have to thank the fantastic team of the ABMT committee for all their supportive and dedicated efforts. Hartmut, Theo, Liz, Rebecca and especially to Debbie who has always seemed to have been there at the end of the phone when I am tearing my hair out! The work in the ABMT is not paid, but there is so much goodwill and effort and I am proud to be its Chair.

So please enjoy reading this journal. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the 11th November.

Lindsey

INNER LANDSCAPES
AMY BARNES

I'm one year into a new practice, and Biodynamic Massage Therapy (BDMT) continues to stimulate and satisfy. For me, setting up a practice is a cross between going on a pilgrimage and working in a studio. For at least a year, my quest has been to look for ways to give voice to the body and to give expression to the slipping glimpses of inner landscapes afforded to us when we do our work. My search took me to a one-week art course at the Art Academy in London where we were skilfully facilitated by Lorna Carmen McNeillii. Much like working in Biodynamic Massage, the process of co-creating (art) provided plenty of material for meditation, and sparked new possibilities for on-going explorations. Please treat the insights offered here as invitations to dialogue.

Electrica

'...do not look at your paper...do not lift your charcoal from the paper...stay connected...'

feeling feelings, sheer flow of energy between her, me, charcoal, page, vroom, vumm, whaa, over there, in here, charcoal, page- circuit of energy- vmm, vmm, phhh, zum, voo, whoaa. The lines drew themselves into being. My doing was purely feeling through my whole body, being in and with the energy, flowing with the river, being the river.

Past

'...rub it out...start again...now use both hands at the same time...stay connected...'

Each time a mark is made, the mark never goes away, but it fades. In your fading, you are the ground for new figures. You remind me of the ebb and flow of being and becoming. Our past is giving to us in ways we cannot often see. But now and again, we hear utterances of the past; popping, gurgling, crackling, fizzing, bubbling, rumbling; it's your music, which we call 'psycho-peristalsis'.

Working from the dark

Working purely on shading, starting with focusing on dark spaces, then figure and form emerged, and boundaries were defined by shades of contrast. Grey areas... you had plenty of 'give', but once your muckiness was cleaned-up, white marked an irreversible point of no return. Attending to shadows, connecting with the void, and concentrating on the darkest areas first was a reversed way of seeing and being with phenomena. In a way, white areas became obvious.

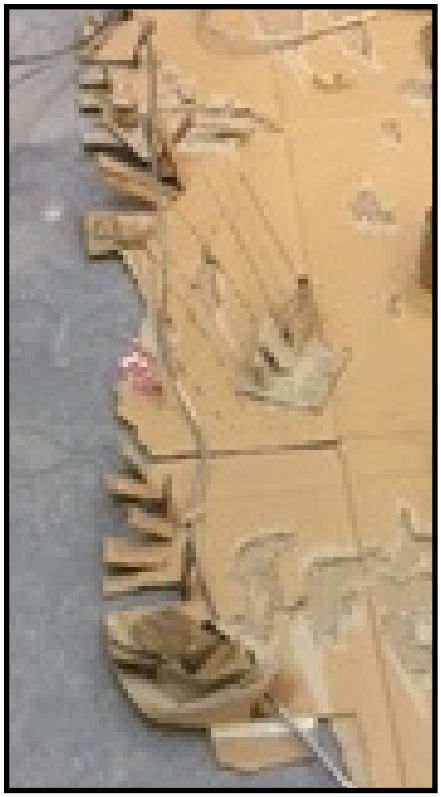
What does this offer BDMT? Would I be deliberately searching for areas with no sound on the stethoscope and working with those areas first? Maybe sometimes only working on areas where there is no sound? Maybe sometimes choosing to switch the sound off?

Abstraction required the distillation or stripping of matter into its essence and essential elements. You are very spacious. You allowed me to enter fully into a relational exploration with neutrality.

A line is a profound thing. Once a line appears, space is defined.

The addition of colour immediately added richness and complexity in a way that was exciting and overwhelming. Shapes, lines and colour - each a universe.

Form and substance using clay as a medium- you are solid, sticky, malleable and strong when wet. But you turn brittle and crumbly when dried, unless you are treated in high heat where chemical reactions give you strength so you don't collapse in on yourself. In Biodynamic Massage, we have the benefit of bones; they provide structure, definition and limit, the fundamental boundary of identity. We worked with you in different ways. I was a little taken aback to observe that no-one worked from the ground up, by shaping you out of original matter. Instead they pieced you together by making clay sausages. Interesting ways we create whole.



The rough and the smooth

You peeled away - like skin. Hidden structures, intricate geography held in unseen ways. But boy, you are tough! I had to pick and tear, bit by bit, patiently, painstakingly, to reveal your textures. Your patchwork of gentle undulating terrain reminded me of shore lines and relief maps, of feeling into, edging between and running along the length and breadth of many inner landscapes. You too had an inbuilt balance between areas that needed to be left intact and areas that can be exposed. Working with you brought to mind the process of therapy; of surfacing hidden structures, recurring patterns, resistance, ah-ha, uh-oh, balance and restraint.

Dancing

Repose

‘In your light I learn how to love.
In your beauty, how to make poems.
You dance inside my chest where no-one sees you,
but sometimes I do,
and that sight becomes this art.’
Rumi

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THE BURGEONING SCIENCE OF 'AFFECTIVE TOUCH' AND HOW IT CAN SUPPORT OUR PRACTICES …NOTES FROM THE 2ND CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF AFFECTIVE TOUCH…

CHARLOTTE CAMERON-BEAUMONT

In September I attended a conference run by IASAT-the International Association for the Study of Affective Touch. It has helped me to understand some fairly new science which seems to explain some of the positive effects of gentle touch on mental and physical health that we see anecdotally with clients of Biodynamic Massage.

The neurophysiology of 'Affective Touch'

So what is this 'affective touch'? The term 'affective touch' is being used by the scientific community to describe comforting, caress-like interpersonal touch ….so, pretty much what we do in Biodynamic Massage, as well as how humans (and, indeed, other primates) touch each other in close relationships of all kinds. The neurophysiology of affective touch is a fairly new area of study. Recent research (within the last 15 years) has found that we have a specialised neurophysiological system that exists purely to enable us to react physiologically to the affective, rather than the discriminative properties of touch.

We have a whole system of neurones (long nerve cells) which exist only to pick up this gentle caress-like touch, and pass the signals back to the brain, which then trigger off physiological pathways which help us to buffer or alleviate stress, and generate a feeling of well-being in response to this touch. The neurones are called C-Tactile afferents (CT afferents) and the whole neurophysiological system is referred to as the CT system.

An exercise in feeling the CT afferents at work:

Try this: get someone to stroke the hairy part of your fore-arm and see how it feels. Quite nice? Now get them to stroke the palm of your hand. Does it feel different? Which one felt the nicest? ……Apparently there are no CT neurones in the glabrous skin (the completely non-hairy skin that we have on our palms, lips, and under our feet), only neurones picking up the discriminative qualities of touch.

So theoretically a stroke on the hairy part of your arm should feel different to a stroke on the palm. And apparently the more hairy parts of ourselves have more CT neurones. So a stroke on the hairy upper side of the arm may feel different to that on the lower side of the arm, which has less CT neurones.

I thought it did feel different. My palm and the lower side of my arm felt more ticklish. So perhaps this is indicative of the fact that the neurones in my palm were setting off a pathway enabling me to discriminate between the different bits of the touch; whereas the CT neurones in the hairy part of my arm were setting off a completely different pathway, reducing stress and making me "feel good" (though bear in mind that discriminative neurones are also present in the hairy part, alongside the CT neurones). Funnily enough you can also trigger the CT neurones by brushing with a paintbrush. Which is, amusingly, how the scientists test it. Not much connection there! Mind you, I tried it with the back of a fork and it still felt nice on my arm! Note that stroking your own arm apparently sets off a different pathway in the brain and doesn't quite do the same thing.

The speed of stroking to which C-Tactile afferents fire most strongly is also that which people perceive to be most pleasant (Walker et al 2017).

However, as you might expect, research also shows that people with a history of abuse do not always experience the same positive feelings when touched in this gentle caress -like way.

Massage – triggering a physiological cascade of well-being

There is a growing amount of research on the effect of massage therapy on the physiology of well-being. Reported effects include: reduced depression,

reduced anxiety, sleep improvement, decreased stress, improved immune function, increased vagal activity (i.e. the parasympathetic nervous system which relates to relaxation), reduced cortisol level, increased serotonin & dopamine, reduced pain, increased oxytocin levels (Uvnas-Moberg 2015) , decreased blood pressure, decreased pulse rate, and even an improvement in bone formation in postmenopausal women. (This listed research is reviewed in Field & Hernandez-Reif, 2005 and Field et al 2014, Field et al 2016). Interestingly, many of these effects are also documented to occur in the massage therapist as well as in the client. Client groups that have been reported through research to benefit from massage include: preterm babies; full-term babies; people with: dementia, autism, cancer, heart conditions, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, anorexia, anxiety, depression, blood pressure issues, asthma, HIV, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's and postmenopausal women. (This research is also discussed in Field & Hernandez-Reif, 2005 , and Field et al 2014, Field et al 2016. See also the list of research undertaken by the Touch Institute: http://www6.miami.edu/touch-research/Research.html).

Most importantly, repeated massage treatments are associated with long-term expression of beneficial effects.

Beneficial effects caused by stimulation of the CT neurones

In the conference I attended, the research described was related specifically to the stimulation of CT neurones rather than massage therapy as described above (though most massage therapy will involve the stimulation of the CT neurones). Therefore, much of the data described was produced by subjects being stroked by a machine controlling a paintbrush. Interestingly and curiously, some strong effects were caused by the stroking of a paintbrush, which included: an increase in oxytocin production (Walker 2017), increase in serotonin, decrease in cortisol, an increasing likelihood of smiling and the decreasing likelihood of frowning (Pawling 2017), and the triggering of the parasympathetic nervous system which causes a cascade of beneficial effects including a reduction of heartbeat, increased heart rate variability (Triscoli 2017), a lowered blood pressure, a lower respiration rate, amongst others (PNS effects discussed by Uta Sailer, IASAT 2017).

However there were some conflicting results: one study found that heart rate decreased to the same extent when stroking on the arm (which has many CT afferents) as it did when stroking on the palm (no CT afferents, only neurones for discriminative touch). Another study asked subjects to rate their feelings of pleasantness when being stroked on the arm and the palm and found that the pleasantness ratings did not differ between the arm and the palm. So it seems that the neurophysiological system surrounding affective touch, though mainly mediated by the CT neurones, is more complex than currently understood and may interlink with the neural system surrounding discriminative touch.

But these findings could also be due to the fact that people's experience of touch differs so much according to their past history. As I mentioned previously, and as we might expect, research finds that people with a history of abuse, or anorexia, do not always experience affective touch in a pleasant way. So it may not always be easy to generalise.

Is it just the CT neurones which cause the beneficial effects of massage?

So an obvious question is: Are the beneficial effects of massage due solely to the workings of the C-Tactile neurones and their associated cascade of effects? I suspect that the benefits of massage are caused by a slightly broader range of neurophysiological systems than just the CT system, though the CT system seems to be a key ingredient. For example, I suspect that the positive effects of social interaction, connectedness, eye contact and emotional expression through talking & smiling or crying - all of which would take place in a massage therapy session - would be also instrumental in causing some of the positive effects of massage therapy, and perhaps the physiology of these components interlink with the CT system somehow. Nevertheless, it seems that the CT neurones must play a very important part in the picture.

Evolution of a system which responds to affective touch

Personally I find it also useful to think of why, and how, the CT system might have evolved - a system which both detects a close-contact gentle touch and then physiologically reacts in such a way to calm the body, and which feels 'nice'.

Theories mentioned in the conference include:

Social bonding between mother and baby (important for survival of baby)

Social Bonding within primate groups (improving social cohesion of group, reducing aggression in the group, and therefore increasing overall survival of the group). As groups tend to be related then this benefits all individuals.

There was also some talk at the conference that the CT system might have originally started to evolve with a function of thermoregulation, because the way in which rodents cuddle up to one another is supposed to be beneficial for their thermoregulation. This would have evolved way back in evolutionary history, long before primates existed. So the thinking is that if this activity feels nice then rodents would be more likely to cuddle up with one another, and this is beneficial for them so gives them an evolutionary advantage. However, you would have thought the fact that they are too cold would be enough of a reason for them to cuddle up. However, if this was true it may explain the reason that the CT neurones are unmyelinated (and therefore slow), as unmyelinated nerves tend to have older phylogenetic origins. The discriminatory touch system is actually more modern, being a myelinated system (and therefore faster).

Interestingly, no-one at the conference mentioned how it might also have evolved because it promotes healing within the individuals involved, thus providing an evolutionary advantage over individuals who do not touch one another in this social way. If you watch groups of primates they spend a lot of time stroking and grooming one another and picking out lice, ticks and pieces of dead skin, which supports their health. And also, the triggering the PNS caused by this social touch will promote self-healing through relaxation. Given the fact that most of the theories above are associated with social interaction, it is not surprising that researchers have found that stimulation of CT afferents leads to increased oxytocin in the body, as oxytocin is considered to be a chemical which facilitates social behaviour in mammals (Walker et al 2017).

It may be that all of the reasons mentioned above were instrumental in the evolution of the CT system, at different points in evolutionary history. Once the hard wiring exists, natural selection may cause it to be altered to fit different tasks in different species.

Use of scientific research in developing your practice

There is so much research to prove the benefits of massage therapy on physical and emotional well-being that it makes sense to use this evidence in the way we market our practices - to widen our client base, to improve people's knowledge in society about the benefits of massage on mental and physical health, and above all increase the numbers of people benefiting from massage and bodywork.

Scientific researchers find patterns which are the same in all of us – our neurones and hormones etc. etc. - and of course we are all similar - but also very different. Biodynamic massage, in particular, stands out in its sensitivity to individuals and their history, and any potential past trauma, all of which greatly affects how they experience touch and how they need to be touched.

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9 THINGS YOU MUST HAVE ON YOUR WEBSITE TO GROW YOUR PRACTICE

KATE CODRINGTON

Online marketing is crucial for growing your practice and developing a business that suits you. Your website is the star of the show; it lets potential clients know what a skilled therapist you are and encourages them to get in touch. Things change fast in the online world and while four years ago a brochure-style site was sufficient, these days your site needs to have something more, if it's not to be left behind. So what are the crucial elements you should have on your site now?

What do clients look for?

Safety

There are a lot of therapists out there. Way more than when I trained. Good ones, indifferent ones, every kind of therapist with every kind of specialisation. It is still possible for people to practice without proper training or accreditation. But does the average new client know what qualifications or insurance to look for? Probably not. Instead she/he will be looking to see that she can trust you and be safe in your care. So this is the first priority when thinking about content for your website. Does your content show that you are safe person? By which I mean:

- Safe boundaries
- Confidentiality
- Will do no harm
- Be authentic

Of course stating that you have safe boundaries, keep their details confidential and will do no harm is not enough. She/he needs to read text and see pictures that show them you have these qualities.

Skills

The same is true for your skills. You will of course have your qualifications on your site, but don't forget to add a list of your CPD as well, which shows that you have an on-going commitment to client care and learning more about your specialization.

Authority

Does your website demonstrate that you know your stuff? Are there blogs that discuss solutions for different conditions or issues your clients face? Are there testimonials visible other than on the 'testimonial' page? If not, perhaps put them on your about page too. Case studies (with clients' permission naturally) are an underused method of telling the story of how you work with people.

Have a clear Goal

What do you want your clients to do when they find your website? If you are in private practice, that might be to book a session. But unless they have got a recommendation from a friend first, a more realistic goal might be to find out more about a particular treatment you offer, give you a ring or join your email list. Whatever your goal is, this should be clearly signaled on the page by the use of white space around the prompt. Bright colours also draw the eye and signal that action is required, orange or red work well. Give a clear instruction to the viewer; 'Get in touch', 'Click to learn more' etc. Have your goal or 'call to action' as it's known in marketing jargon, high up on your website so it can be seen without scrolling down.

Blog

Having a blog on your site is beneficial for a number of reasons:

- Google likes a site that has fresh content regularly uploaded, so it's great for SEO. It will help your site rise up the rankings for your keywords and more people will see your site.
- You can demonstrate to clients that you are safe, authoritative and authentic.
- Your posts will give you something to share on social media so that you can spread the word about what you do.
- You also will have high value material for your newsletters.
- They will show that you are an expert in your field.
- Showing your authentic self will help you to build relationships with your potential clients.
- Blog posts are the perfect place to show how you work and when clients read the stories you tell, will be able to imagine themselves relaxing in your therapy room.
- Posts written with professionals in mind will help to build your referral network.

A sign up form

Writing a regular email may seem like a whole heap of extra work but it's worth collecting the emails of your client group. Here's what regular mailings can do:

- You can build trust over time with new clients.
- Remind old clients that you still are working.
- Share your new skills and CPD.
- Share offers and promotions.
- Cross promote with other practitioners. If you work with pregnancy, for example, you could agree to spread the word about an antenatal yoga class and your yogi friend can do the same for you. In this way, your audience is doubled.
- If someone signs up, they are already interested in you and what you offer and likely to be your target audience (or other therapists trying to figure out why you're so hot!) In your emails you can tell them more about how they can benefit from your work.
- Reinforce the message of your safety, skills and authority in your field.
- Email marketing is low cost and a far better deal than advertising.

Mailchimp is an email provider where you can create professional looking mailings to your clients and manage your email lists. Mailchimp is free and only starts to charge you when you have 2,000 subscribers.

You might also consider offering a freebie in return for the email. It needs to be something that your client group finds irresistible. I have instructions for doing self-care belly massage, but it might be a series of stretches to support back health, tips to de-stress or whatever it is that will appeal to your ideal client.

Compelling ‘about me’ page

According to copywriting expert CopyBlogger, the ‘about me’ page is the most frequently viewed page on a website. If you are a massage therapist, you ARE your brand and people want to know what they are buying. Here are some guidelines for your ‘about me’ page:

- Write it in the first person.
- Have a clear photo of yourself smiling and looking professional.
- Tell how you are going to solve your ideal clients’ number one problem .
- Talk about how you can help.
- Talk about what they’re interested in.
- Give a flavor of what you’re like.
- Don’t be afraid of having some fun, how about writing ‘three surprising things you never knew about me’?
- Add in your social media links.
- Tell them what to do next with a clear call to action.

Sandra Swan, http://sandraswancoaching.com/about-me/ a mid-life career change coach, has a great ‘about me’ page; authentic and speaking powerfully to her ideal clients.

Write for your ideal client

Many therapists feel that they must appeal to everyone in order to build their practice. But in truth if you speak to everyone, you will attract lots of people who you can’t really help and who fall outside your special interest. Getting more specific will draw in the people who want what you are offering. It will also show you where to put your marketing energies to be effective. Once they have benefitted from your treatments, they will of course refer their friends too! To get clarity on your ideal clients you can either take your existing client base and look for commonality, or if you are just starting out perhaps do a survey through social media. You could ask:

- Why they are looking for a massage now?
- What the problem is they want you to solve?
- What effect this will have in their lives?

Armed with this information, when you are writing the content for your website you can talk about the sort of problems your ideal clients are facing, in their language, show them how you are going to solve them and how they re going to feel after their treatment.

White Space

Having an uncluttered, well-designed site will look highly professional. It’s the cornerstone of great design and makes people keep reading. Often we have so much to say, to educate, inform and offer that sites get very crowded and overwhelming.

Having white space makes it easy for the client to navigate around the site and find the information she needs.

Pay special attention to:

- Space around the menu layout
- Space between paragraphs making text easier to read
- Space around your call to action
- Use an easily read font
- Use sub-headings

Mobile friendly

50% of Google searches are now done on a mobile phone or tablet so it is crucial that your website works well on these formats and that clients can find the information they need to contact you on their phones. In technical jargon, the website must be 'responsive'. Whether you're using Wordpress or Wix most platforms are getting up to speed with this, but you must always check (and keep checking!) that your website is doing what you want it to on a mobile phone. Google favours sites that are mobile friendly and fast loading and will give them a higher ranking over slower, mobile un-friendly sites.

Great Images

A picture tells a thousand words. Having images that fit your branding is important so people can tell at a glance they are in the right place. Images should be

- Not too bland (enough waterlilies already!)
- Not too generic, a picture of a model with long nails massaging a flawless back may not speak to your ideal client
- Not too real! If you use photographs of yourself working, use a professional photographer and/or good lighting to make sure you are seen at your best.

It is illegal to swipe images from the internet and use them for your site. You must either have permission from the photographer, buy stock images or use images that are free for commercial use. There are a number of excellent sites where you can find them www.pixabay.com is my favourite.

Easily found contact details

Now you have wowed your client with your stylish site, told them how you're going to solve their problems, they need to get hold of you. Make sure your contact details are easy to find on every page. Clients will quickly click away if they get frustrated by not being able to find your phone or email.

Managing your website is an ongoing process that requires attention in the same way as your accounts and your CPD. There is no need to be overwhelmed, just do a little at a time and your website will grow with your business.

Kate wears three hats; she specializes in massage for women's health, runs online courses for therapists who want to turn their passion into a successful business and leads Love Your Belly workshops for women's health.

www.katecodringtonmassage.co.uk

www.katecodrington.co.uk

www.loveyourbelly.org.uk

CONNECTING WITH CONFIDENCE

LINDSEY NICHOLAS

Over the summer I decided to survey members to find out what kind of support they needed in order to build successful massage practices. Responses were mainly from new and up-and-coming practitioners, but here I've summarised and reflected on some of my findings.

What can we as an Association do to support you in growing your massage practices? One respondent to the survey suggested an editorial in the Daily Mail. Does anyone have any contacts here?!

If this were to happen, as practitioners we would be practically flooded with requests for appointments, almost overnight. We could be overwhelmed with clients, which might not be a good thing.

How many clients is enough and how many is too much? These are emotional considerations as well as monetary ones. When you are starting off, it can seem so difficult to get even one client. Speaking for myself here, at one point, when I was up to three clients I was beginning to feel as if it was too much. Not that I couldn't work with this number – but I found (and still do) the anticipation and the winding-down from the work tricky to negotiate. Part of me would love more clients, another part wanted to run away. I am still finding my way.

So, don't give up the day job – is probably the first thing we hear. But then – when you have a bit of space to work and welcome clients, what then? What kind of support do you need?

One respondent said that supervision and therapy were sufficient to give them the holding they needed to practise.

There seems to be a kind of balance to be found between doing the job yourself and connecting with outer support. For that person, the right balance is present. With all the support in the world you are sooner than later going to have to go it alone. But what else do we need? What else, in the outer world, if you like (as opposed to the 'inner' world of the therapy room) can support and also energise and inform our work. What do you need to help us feel relevant and safe enough to create a useful role in the public realm?

Two issues came to the fore. The first was connected with our relationship to the public world - the wider understanding of biodynamic massage that is taking place in society. This can be quite a lot for one newly qualified therapist to take on individually. Biodynamic massage is not well-known, but it is becoming better known. Therapies which involve the body are gathering interest. As a society, our perception and relationship with our bodies, is changing, and the notion of embodiment is gaining currency. Questions in the survey drew responses about general PR and widening awareness of biodynamic work. How can we be more at the forefront of current trends and make our mark on this period in our social and spiritual evolution?

Social Media springs to mind. I currently post on the Association's two Facebook sites. One is a closed group the other is public – and I am always happy to post items publicising members' offers, workshops etc, whether they are directly linked to massage or to wider therapeutic interests. Postings can link to the website, which garners more traffic and thus people can also get informed about biodynamic massage. At the moment, I manage this site but would welcome others to have management access to post links and information.

This is one clear and effective way using social media, to tap into the Zeitgeist. There must be others. I would welcome contribution from people who understand IT better than I do! I got to grips with Survey Monkey over the summer and my next stop is Mail Chimp, with a view to creating a mailing list via the website. Slowly but surely.

The other issue that surfaced through the survey was of course, how to gain more confidence at an individual level.

Facebook works in ways which I do not understand in terms of sharing information. I wonder if it is the same for sharing support? Our membership is reasonably small (62 at last count) and geographically we are spread all over the country. Supervision and therapy are the core supports for our work, but what else is there? When we have too few clients or too many clients or are struggling with our self -care between clients, are there other small but significant points of connectivity we can make, to sustain us? I'm intrigued to discover three therapists in Bristol are getting together to give peer support. How does that work? Does it make it more fun? Less lonely? What does it involve? Within this model, is there scope to support each other's marketing? (sometimes it is easier to promote someone else than yourself, or collectively it could be easier?).

It got me thinking that as more practitioners emerge, working together could lead to gains both at the personal and the public level. How else could communicating as a group raise the profile of not only members, but of biodynamic practice itself?

Working in groups or even pairs, could we offer more taster sessions, open evenings, perhaps at someone's house? This could be done at a local level.

This has been a small opening to the debate that will inform our Afternoon Session on 11th November. Other suggestions included a good referral system, as well as the opportunity to operate student clinics outside London. If you'd like the join the discussion or to feel more supported, please come along and join us on the 11th. I'm sure we all have lots to share.

AGM

Royal Society of Medicine in London.

November 11, 2017

2pm

MY EXPERIENCE OF BEING "TOUCHED" AND "HELD" IN BIODYNAMIC SUPERVISION

HILARY PRICE

I am writing as part of my CPD audit for the ABMT Membership Year 2015-16, but I hope to show that my experience of Biodynamic Supervision goes far beyond the "box-ticking" we all have to do.

For me that year was a time of major transition, upheaval and loss. I took some time away from work when a close family member needed care and support following major surgery. I moved house twice in six months, and as a result I left the clinic where I had first begun my work as a Biodynamic Massage Therapist 8 years earlier. Some of my other work in an agency setting became extremely challenging, firstly due to a serious conflict with my line manager and subsequently due to the extended absence of my in-house supervisor.

Throughout all this I was supported to maintain my professional focus and to continue my client work by my Biodynamic Supervisor, who paid close attention to my ability to self-regulate both personally and professionally during significant changes in my living and working environments. This process served as a crucial indicator of my fitness to practice, and, of course, to the digestion and integration of my client work.

Since I was also without a personal therapist for some of the time, the supervision space was one of the few constants in my personal and professional life – a secure base I could return to week by week. (Perhaps it's worth mentioning that I continue to have supervision weekly because the majority of my work is with psychotherapy clients, some presenting complex challenges.)

I remain profoundly grateful for the strong relationship my supervisor and I have built together over the years – for me the deep, shared understanding of many years of client work and professional growth is of greater value than the new perspective sought by some therapists when they change supervisor.

I was aware how "touched" I felt by my supervisor's concern for me as a person during this particularly unsettling year, and of the "holding" I experienced in the supervisory relationship, especially when I tried to avoid my own difficulties by talking immediately about the problems clients were bringing. Sometimes I needed reminding to stop and just let myself breathe and be.

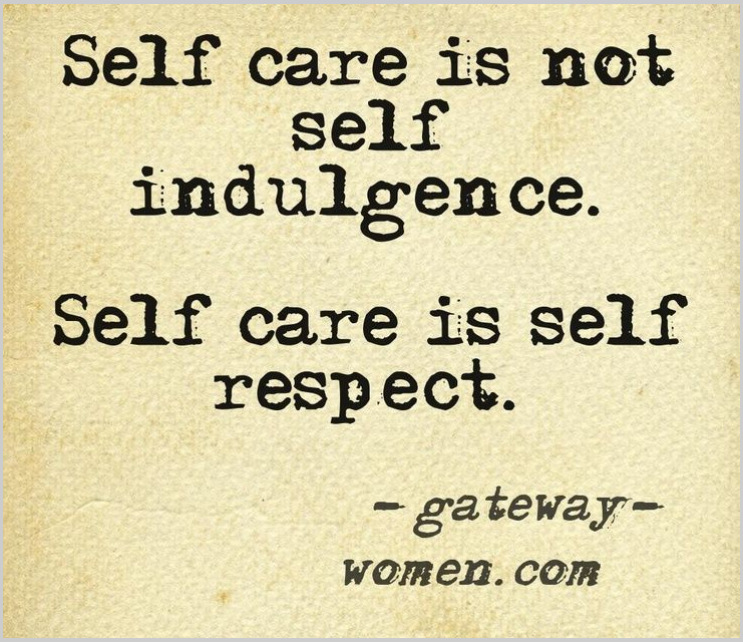
In my personal therapy and training the experience of being touched and held was deeply powerful and significant – indeed it was my early experience of Biodynamic Massage in particular that inspired me to become a therapist myself. So hungry was I still for this experience of touch when I began seeing clients myself that I felt a surge of regret, grief even, on first entering my supervisor's room and seeing the massage couch there, knowing that it would not be available to me in this setting.

What I have learned since then is that my supervisor can "touch" and "hold" me in different, but equally powerful ways, and that both the stimulus and the containment I receive from interaction in supervision make a vital contribution to my ability both to "hold" myself professionally and to touch and hold my clients at many levels. Perhaps most importantly I have understood that my readiness to simply be present in supervision is a good indicator of my readiness to be present with clients.

Just as the experience of being touched and held by my therapist has inspired me to become a therapist, so the experience of being touched and held by my supervisor is inspiring me now to consider becoming a supervisor too, and perhaps this will be the next major step in my continuing professional development.

A FINAL WORD:

Anita Jasser is a biodynamic massage therapist and yoga teacher in London, below she shares some of her thoughts on how she practices self-care for herself.



find Anita on Instagram
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Accountability by definition means: the fact or condition of being accountable; responsibility. I have been thinking a lot lately about accountability and what i have found is that most of us make ourselves accountable for goals and actions that we believe we need to do, to complete or to be responsible for. But, how often do we make ourselves accountable for our own self care or receiving care in general? I reflected upon this when I got food poisoning on Wednesday and I realised that I do make myself accountable for self-care and receiving care every day. Every morning, I have a routine which involves some biodynamic massage, followed by meditation and a forrest yoga practice. I don't always have time to do all three, but I hold myself accountable to do what I can to nourish myself before I begin my day. What self care do you or can you hold yourself to everyday? It need not be big, or timely, but something that is simply nourishing and mindful.