

## Don't skip the tummy!

Many of you who get full-body massage from me (or other therapists) may have noticed that we often skip the abdomen area. Most people want that few minutes to be spent on the back instead, so many of us massage therapists have gotten out of the habit of massaging those tummies. Also, the abdominal area often "feels" vulnerable, so it is less threatening to just skip it, especially if we're just doing a relaxation massage.

Last November I became convinced that massaging the abdomen may be the MOST important body part to work. Here I had been skipping it for the last decade.... Last November, I took the first class of Visceral Manipulation, which focused on the peritoneal viscera (which includes the stomach, liver, small intestine, and most of the large intestine). Like the Connective Tissue Massage training I have had, much of the focus is getting the fascia around these structures to soften, be more hydrated, and "slide and glide" against their neighboring structures better.

If I offer to massage your abdomen at your next massage, here are some benefits to consider:

**1. The abdominal viscera is a rich source of serotonin.** According to Michael Gershon, MD, "95% of all serotonin in the body is in the gut, where it triggers digestion. Nerve cells in the gut also use serotonin to signal back to the brain." (please see his book: The Second Brain (HarperCollins, 1999)

# Maintaining Touch



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Serotonin is a neurotransmitter which helps you feel calm, relaxed, sleepy, happy, etc. It is often what is out of balance in people who are depressed or who have ADD. It has been my experience that getting your stomach and your small intestine massaged puts you into that lovely meditative sleep state very quickly. Maybe that's why massaging frogs' stomachs will "hypnotize" them..... Anyway, there must be a nice release of serotonin while getting abdominal massage, based on how I and many of you respond.

**2. Sticky abdominal viscera makes for musculoskeletal dysfunction.** Several things can interrupt the viscera's ability to "slide and glide" against its neighboring structures (this is true for myoskeletal fascia as well). These include injury, infection, repetitive stress, poor hydration, poor nutrition, etc. When one of the visceral organs has its natural motion inhibited by one of these factors, then it doesn't slide and glide against the other organs properly. Then they don't slide and glide, and a whole domino effect gets set up. By freeing up the viscera, I have found (in my own body as well as others') that remote musculoskeletal issues are positively affected. For instance, when the organs that articulate with the abdominal diaphragm are freed, one finds that they can turn their neck more freely, even though the two are not directly connected. Fascia indirectly connects a lot of things.

**3. Abdominal massage doesn't hurt like Connective Tissue Massage, but has many of the same benefits.** Whereas there are a lot of pain receptors in tendons, muscles, bone, etc., there are very few in the viscera. They also require only the mildest of pressure to work on, so it feels and is extremely gentle work. However, its gentleness can also sometimes frustrate those clients who really like to feel like they've been worked over.

Anyway, consider having your viscera massaged next time!

### Workshops Through Community Education



Woodbury / Cottage Grove school district (651)458-6600 or [www.cecool.com](http://www.cecool.com):

#### Gigi's Self-Help for Headaches

Monday, April 25, 2005

#### Gigi's Backrubs for Couples

Thursday, February 10, 2005

North Saint Paul school district (651) 748-7434:

#### Nancie's Hatha Yoga

(customized for both beginner and advanced learners)

Classes are ongoing

Call 651-748-7434 for more info.

"Life holds hidden gifts in its hands, and gives them to each of us when it is time."  
-Flavia

### Nancie's Corner

Dear Clients and Friends:

As Valentine's Day approaches and cold/flu season hits us, let us keep in mind some of the "single folks" we know who may feel forgotten this time of year. If you have a friend or neighbor, especially one who has recently lost his or her spouse, consider preparing a Care Bag for them! You may want to add some chicken soup, kleenex, cozy socks, and maybe a gift certificate for a 1/2 hour massage (only \$42.60). Then, sit back and watch your friend smile, knowing that they feel remembered this Valentine's Day.

### Nancie

612-590-8124

p.s. Speaking of massage and the cold/flu season, if you have had a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea within the 24 hours before your next massage appointment, do yourself (and us) a favor and **stay in bed**. Call us to let us know you're not coming.



### A Sensitive Touch



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