



Staying in Touch®

Hello—

How have you been doing?

This month's guest article comes from New Zealand and features excerpts from a more extensive piece on the necessity of touch in our lives.

There are some things in our lives that are vitally important to our survival. For example, we all know that without water, we wouldn't last more than a few days.

Touch is one of those things that can make the difference between having a healthy and happy existence or living a life that lacks vitality.

The health benefits provided by touch can be easily overlooked, so keep reading to learn some of the many life advantages touch can offer you.

Obviously, massage could be considered the ultimate "touch experience," but don't overlook sharing hugs with loved ones and interaction with pets.

Enjoy the rest of your summer; see you soon for your next massage!

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Tell your loved ones what you love about massage; your referrals are always appreciated!

Touch: Vital to a Healthy Life by Elli Jacobs

Touch is our very first sense connection to the world from birth and a fundamental human need throughout our entire life span.

"Touch is a powerful form of nourishment that goes right to the core of the parts of ourselves where only that 'silent' language can fully express what we're feeling," says psychologist Cornelia Gerken. "When this happens, the sensation we receive can play a role in putting us back on our feet in terms of trust, relaxation, deep connection—and it opens us up to all the other great things that may not be visible in that moment."

But how does the sense of touch work?

"When we're touched, pressure receptors under that area of skin become more active and this increase in activity tells the nervous system there has been contact in a specific area of skin," Cornelia explains.

"These signals are then processed through the nervous system and travel along the spinal column, to reach the brain, which sorts and interprets the information. ..."

"When we're touched by someone who cares, our mind gravitates towards that feeling we're experiencing, which means we get out of our own heads and drop into our bodies," says Dr. Karen Philip, counselling therapist. "As a result, most of our worries or concerns are automatically reduced or lowered."

Cornelia agrees, touch is a great way of reconnecting us with what our bodies truly require, and in this way we can feel a deep sense of fullness that leads to spiritual benefits.

Consequently, touch can help tackle a modern epidemic—loneliness.

Research from University College London showed that affectionate touch can mitigate the harmful effects of loneliness because slow, gentle touch made people feel socially bonded.

"When we live in our heads we can feel isolated," confirms Dr Philip. "But, because touch is a felt sensation that represents connectedness, engaging in activities that incorporate tactile elements helps alleviate those feelings of loneliness many of us feel.

"In turn, once we're able to connect with people who care for us this can develop into verbal communication, which can really mitigate the health consequences of loneliness," she adds.

Take away the pain— In healthcare, research from the University of Colorado found that when people experiencing pain held hands with their romantic partner, their heart and respiration rates synched up, resulting in an analgesic, pain-killing effect—and communicated empathy between partners, where they understood what they were feeling in a given moment.

"Such an expression of empathy is absolutely vital for human beings to thrive and exist in a more balanced way in the world, with the complexities that we face on a day-to-day basis," explains Dr Philip.

(See **Touch ...** on back page)

Touch . . . *(continued from front)*

Research from Brazil, which looked at the effectiveness of therapeutic touch involving 30 elderly patients with chronic pain, concluded that it was effective to decrease pain intensity and depressive attitudes and symptoms, as well as improve sleep quality.

Positive touch and cognitive function

"Positive touch contributes towards better cognitive function as it intentionally activates the flow of oxytocin, endorphins, serotonin and dopamine—the quartet of chemical hormones responsible for happiness and wellbeing, which are also found to act as a natural antidepressant," explains Dr Philip.

"In turn, this reduces cortisol, the stress hormone, and initiates the parasympathetic response of the nervous system. In other words this slows down the cardiovascular stress response—lowering heart rate and blood pressure—and relaxes the activity of the digestive system or gut, also referred to as our 'second brain'," adds Cornelia.

Oxford University's Center for Computational Neuroscience, used functional

magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to look at how pleasant touch impacts our behaviour, and found that touch activates the area of the brain that processes information related to reward and decision-making.

It also triggered the vagus nerve—the main nerve controlling the body's parasympathetic nervous system.

What are the best types of touching?

Slow, loving strokes are thought to be the most beneficial kind of touch as it has a restorative quality and hormonal benefits.

Massage benefits—

Research published in *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* found that massage may help treat anxiety and other mental health disorders like depression, due to its ability to reduce cortisol and anxiety symptoms.

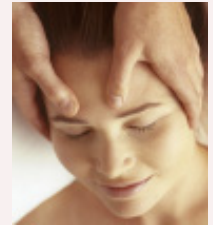
Further 2010 research confirms that massages could boost the immune system and improve sleep.

The physical benefits include a decrease in heart rate and blood pressure, plus it helps people bond and improves overall emotional wellbeing.

Source: www.nowtolove.co.nz

**Lift a loved one's spirits with
a massage gift certificate —**

Call today to order ...



**Too often we underestimate the power of a touch,
a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest
compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all
of which have the potential to turn a life around.**

—Leo Buscaglia

The content of this newsletter is not intended to replace professional medical advice. If you're ill, please consult a physician.
