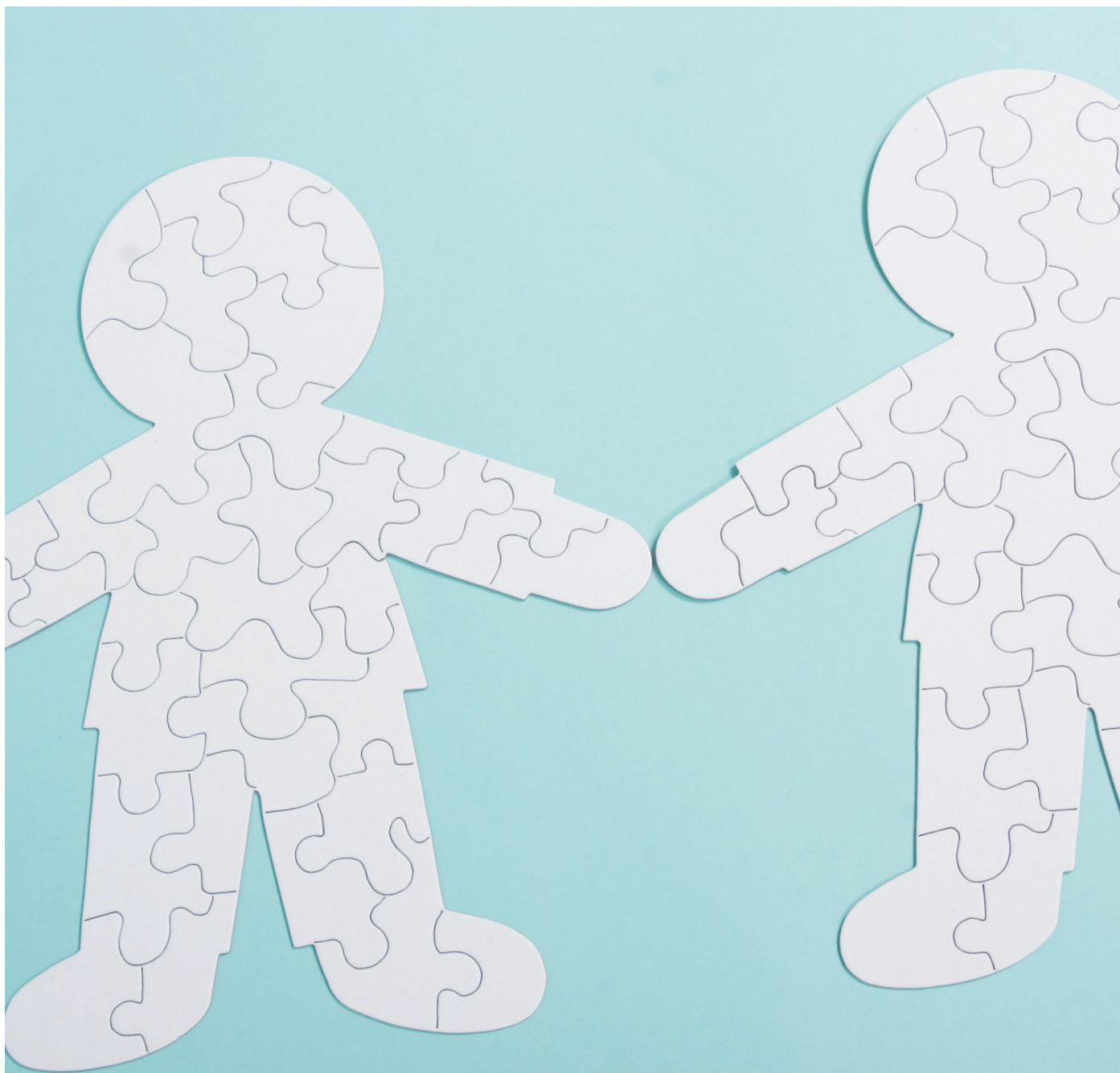


fingertips for the client



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THERAPEUTIC COMMUNICATION

BY MARY KATHLEEN ROSE

Receiving a massage is a time to rest and rejuvenate as you experience the deeply nourishing effects of skillful touch. As your muscles relax and your mind unwinds, do you ever wonder how to talk with your massage therapist or bodyworker? Here are some guidelines about what to expect regarding verbal communication before, during, and after a session.

BEFORE THE SESSION

Before beginning the hands-on session, you will usually fill out a client intake form with contact information, medical history, and your reasons for receiving massage. Your therapist will ask you, “Is there anything I need to be aware of?” Share any relevant information in order to ensure that you receive a session that is appropriate and safe for you. For example, if you have had recent surgery or an injury, it is important that the therapist know, in order to avoid causing further injury or discomfort. Your practitioner should also ask, “How can I help you?” This is your opportunity to tell your therapist what you need and to state your preferences for the kind of bodywork you like, and the parts of your body most needing attention. You can say what kind of techniques or degree of pressure you like. You can state your intention: “I need overall relaxation,” or “My back is in a lot of pain. Can you focus on that?”

DURING THE SESSION

As you receive the hands-on work of the session, your therapist will ask, “How is the pressure I am using?” Give your honest feedback. After all, the therapist wants to accommodate your needs and preferences. Do not hesitate to speak up if anything is uncomfortable to you. Specify if you want more or less pressure; more or less of a particular

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technique; or if you want specific attention to an area of your body.

A massage is a time to relax, so you can expect that your therapist will be quiet and attentive. If you find that he or she is more talkative than you like, it is OK to say, “I’d just like to enjoy silence during my session.” On the other hand, if you like to talk, and it is helpful for you to talk—either about what you are experiencing in your body, or simply as a way of letting go of the stress of the day—that is also OK.


What is most important to remember is that this is your time to be nurtured. It is appropriate that the practitioner respond to your preferences. It is not a time for the therapist to carry on a personal conversation or talk in any way that detracts from your experience.



AFTER THE SESSION

Following the session, the therapist may ask, “How do you feel now?” or ask about a specific issue that was addressed in the session. Share anything that occurs to you that might be useful feedback. For example, you might say: “I feel great. Just what I needed!” or “I loved that work on my feet. Maybe next time, you could spend more time with that.” This brings closure to the session and also gives an idea about what you might expect in a future visit.

It is important to know that bodyworkers provide their services based on their specific training. It is not appropriate for massage therapists to answer medical questions that are beyond the range of their knowledge and/or legal scope of practice. The value of therapeutic massage and bodywork lies in skillful application of appropriate technique, as well as the sense of ease that is created by quality, mutual communication.

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