

Encyclopedia of Thai Massage

*A Complete Guide to Traditional
Thai Massage Therapy and Acupressure*



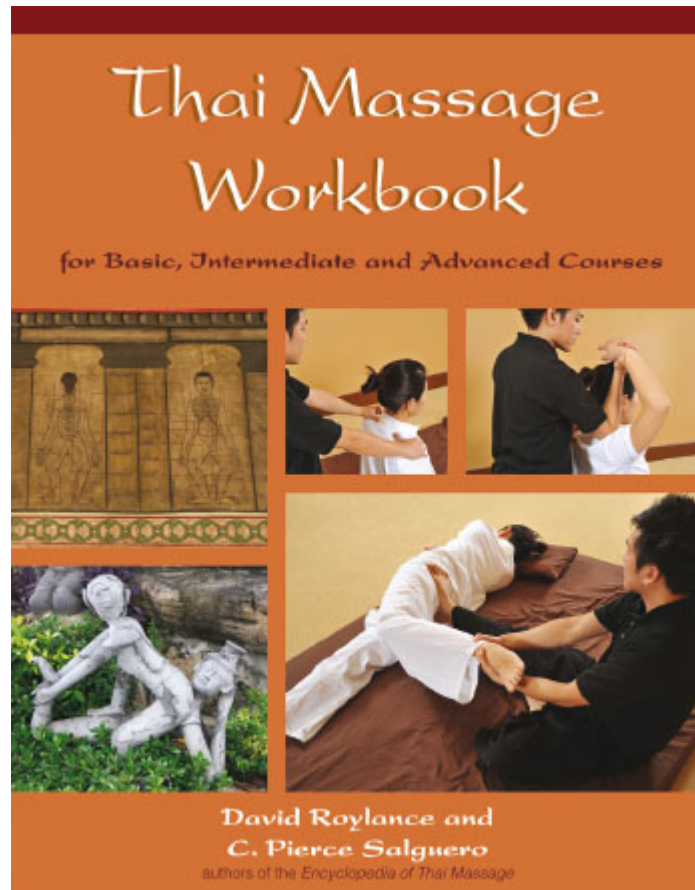
**Dr. C. Pierce Salguero
and David Roylance**

Second Edition, Fully Revised and Updated

Encyclopedia of Thai Massage

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Fully Revised and Updated

Companion Book Available



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*A Complete Guide to
Traditional Thai Massage Therapy
and Acupressure*

*Dr. Pierce Salguero
and
David Roylance*



FINDHORN PRESS

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In Memory of
Ajahn (“Master”) Sintorn Chaichakan

Traditional Thai Medicine Doctor

Founder of Shivagakomarpaj Lineage
(“Northern Style” Thai Massage)

Founder of Thai Massage School Shivagakomarpaj
(“Old Medicine Hospital”)

August 2, 1939 - October 18, 2005

THROUGHOUT the long history of Thai Massage and Traditional Thai Medicine, there have been a handful of highly respected individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the body of knowledge practiced today. This book is dedicated to the lasting memory of Ajahn Sintorn, who was one such person, and who originated the teachings shared here.

Ajahn Sintorn’s life was dedicated to pursuing knowledge and giving to others. He and his staff regularly provided free medical care to Buddhist monks and remote Thai villagers. He operated his traditional hospital based on a sliding scale to ensure all those who needed medical attention could be

treated. His life and his legacy exemplify compassion in care for others, generosity in teaching, and loving kindness to all.

We, Ajahn Sintorn's family, and the direct inheritors of his lineage and school, would like to express our deepest appreciation and respect for Ajahn Sintorn's lifetime of teachings. He is our link to the past and he will continue to live on in our hearts and our mind. We would also like to express our endorsement of this book. We are very pleased to see his teachings honored and reaching those outside of Thailand. We believe that our past is our future, and that Ajahn Sintorn's teachings are vibrantly alive in the hands of the next generation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a stylized heart shape on the left and a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Ajahn Wasan Chaichakan
Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized letter 'P' followed by the name 'Pongpiam' in a cursive script.

Mr. Parawat Pongpiam
Managing Director

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Preface

THIS IS A COMPREHENSIVE book about one of the main branches of Traditional Thai Medicine, known in the West as Thai Massage. The manipulation of the body with intent to heal is a practice probably as old as the human body itself. The instincts to press one's head when it aches or to rub a sore calf muscle lie at the foundation of this healing technique. Historically, this natural instinct for healing touch has been developed and systematized to a high degree in many Asia cultures, where massage is an important part of systems of traditional medicine.

In Siam (premodern Thailand), indigenous medical practices, including massage, intermingled with Chinese and Indian influences and developed into a complex medical tradition encompassing therapy for the mind, body, and vital energies. Long preserved in Buddhist temples, which served as community centers and cultural libraries, Thai medical wisdom was transmitted from teacher to student through oral and written tradition, resulting in the fascinating amalgam of mythology, medicine, and spirituality that is still practiced today across the country.

This book will cover many aspects of Thai Massage, based on my experience as a teacher of Thai medicine since the mid-1990s. I first attended and later taught at a bilingual traditional medicine school, the Thai Massage School Shivagakomarpaj ("Old Medicine Hospital") in Chiang Mai. In 1997, Ajahn Sintorn wrote me a letter recognizing me as a teacher and granted me permission to disseminate his teachings in the West. I also studied with many other teachers, both well known and otherwise, while living in Thailand for 26 months over the course of the 1990s and early 2000s. Upon my return to the United States in 2001, I founded the Tao Mountain School of Traditional Thai Massage and Herbal Medicine, which merged with the Thai Institute of Healing Arts in 2009.

I should say at the outset that any of my teachers would say it is impossible to learn from a book without hands-on guidance, and I would agree. The oral tradition is still honored in Thailand to this day, and most massage teachers operate by verbally explaining and physically demonstrating each movement while their students listen and watch. Even in the massage schools that offered textbooks for their courses, the books are seldom more than a series of crude drawings. To this day, there has not been very much written on the subject of Thai medical theory, either by Thais or by Western practitioners, and a systematic explanation of the theory of Thai Massage is virtually impossible to come by. Massage teachers in Thailand are unlikely to give direct answers to theoretical questions, and will expect the students instead to learn these answers through their own diligence, practice, and patience. Western aficionados of Thai massage impatient for deeper understanding often mistakenly apply Chinese, Indian, or biomedical theory to the practice, sometimes grossly distorting Thai tradition in the process.

Despite my best intentions to convey the techniques of Thai Massage as clearly as possible, the reader must realize that learning this massage from a book is a vastly different experience than learning with a traditional teacher. The structured lessons at the hospital were invaluable as a base of knowledge for further practice. In my own training, however, it was the contradictory and unstructured sessions with traditional practitioners outside of a formal institutional setting that allowed me to experience this knowledge as a true art. Like transitioning from learning scales to playing jazz improvisations, or from drilling on basketball skills to becoming a star professional player, these masters had internalized their techniques so deeply that rote learning had given way to intuition. It was watching the graceful dances of these teachers as they worked with patients that instilled in me an everlasting respect and love for their priceless cultural heritage.

It is in this creative and intuitive spirit that many Western practitioners go on to combine Thai Massage techniques with a wide range of other healing arts from East and West (including Yoga Therapy, Swedish massage, Reiki, Shiatsu, and many other types of bodywork). In this book, on the contrary, I

will allow the Thai tradition to stand on its own merits. I do so in order to convey to the reader the depth and totality of this art, and to honor the Thai people who taught me.

I have attempted to conscientiously transmit this healing knowledge as it was taught to me. I have brought to this book a discussion of proper alignment and safety from my personal practice of yoga, some reference to modern anatomy for convenience and precision, and an interest in history and culture cultivated through my academic training as a Ph.D. in the history of medicine. On the whole, however, my mission in this edition of the book continues to be to present the material in the most authentic way possible. In the second edition, I have brought on board my good friend and long-time collaborator David Roylance as a contributing author. David brings thousands of hours of experience in teaching Thai Massage to all sorts of students, and a wealth of knowledge and personal experience of the Thai culture. He also has been given the unique distinction of being recognized as the head of the Shivagakomarpaj Lineage in the West.

This book is an offering to my teachers, and to the lineages to which we belong. Despite the difficulty of spoken communication, they taught me much with their hands, with gestures, and with endless patience and smiles. I gratefully dedicate this book to my primary teacher Ajahn Sintorn Chaichakan; to my teachers at “Old Medicine,” Ajahn Wasan Chaichakan, Sutat, Pramost, Daeng, Sasitorn, Song, and others; to my teachers at other schools in Chiang Mai, including Mama Lek, Pikun, and Mama Nit; and to all my teachers, whether they taught me for months or hours. May they be happy, well, and safe wherever they may now be.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Salguero". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Dr. C. Pierce Salguero

Nov. 21, 2010

My contributions to this book represent the culmination of over a decade's worth of constant interaction with the Thai people, their culture, and their healing arts. There are too many names to list here and too many conversations to detail. So in the spirit of presenting an offering to others, I would like to dedicate my contributions in this book to the countless individuals who have shared traditional Thai knowledge with me.

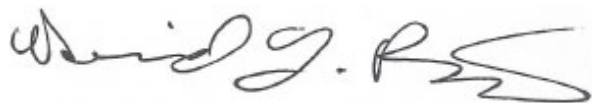
The Thais have embraced me as a member of their community, and I have always found them to be gracious, kind, warm, gentle, and very loving. Whether it be at the Thai Massage School Shivagakomarpaj (the "Old Medicine Hospital"), in formal training with Thai medicine doctors and shamans, or in private discussions with family and friends, the Thai people have shared their traditional practices with me openly and without thought of monetary gain. Whenever I have not quite understood, they have had the patience to explain things to me over and over again.

The teachings of Ajahn Sintorn Chaichakan, founder of the Shivagakomarpaj Lineage and Northern Style of Thai Massage, have no doubt had the most impact on my understanding of Thai massage and Thai medicine. Ajahn Sintorn's methods and knowledge have provided a solid framework in which to understand everything else I've studied. I learned the majority of these teachings from Dr. C. Pierce Salguero since, regrettably, Ajahn Sintorn passed away prior to an opportunity for me to meet him.

Today, I am very close to the Chaichakans and am considered by them to be a member of their family. The Chaichakan family has asked me to carry forward the teachings of their family outside Thailand, to represent the lineage started by Ajahn Sintorn in the West, and to operate the sister school of the Old Medicine Hospital. This is a great honor and an enormous responsibility. With the support of the Thai community, I look forward to continuing to share the teachings of Ajahn Sintorn. My goal is to provide resources to the public that create a bridge to the Thai healing arts traditions and allow the opportunity for Westerners to continue learning the fascinating traditional medicine from Thailand.

While this book is an offering to my teachers, it is just as much an offering to my students. Since teaching my first students and sharing massage with my first clients, they have encouraged me to publish a book. In every class I've taught since 2004—whether a Basic, Intermediate, or Advanced Thai massage course—students have requested a text that brought together everything that was being shared in the classroom. This is that text.

To my close friend Dr. C. Pierce Salguero, my wife Sararut Roylance, and all the students, employees, and individuals who have helped me in my pursuit of understanding and sharing all things Thai, I humbly say “thank you” with deep appreciation for your support and encouragement.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David L. Roylance". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "D" and a stylized "R".

David L. Roylance

April 11, 2011

Part 1

The Basics of Thai Massage



CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Tradition



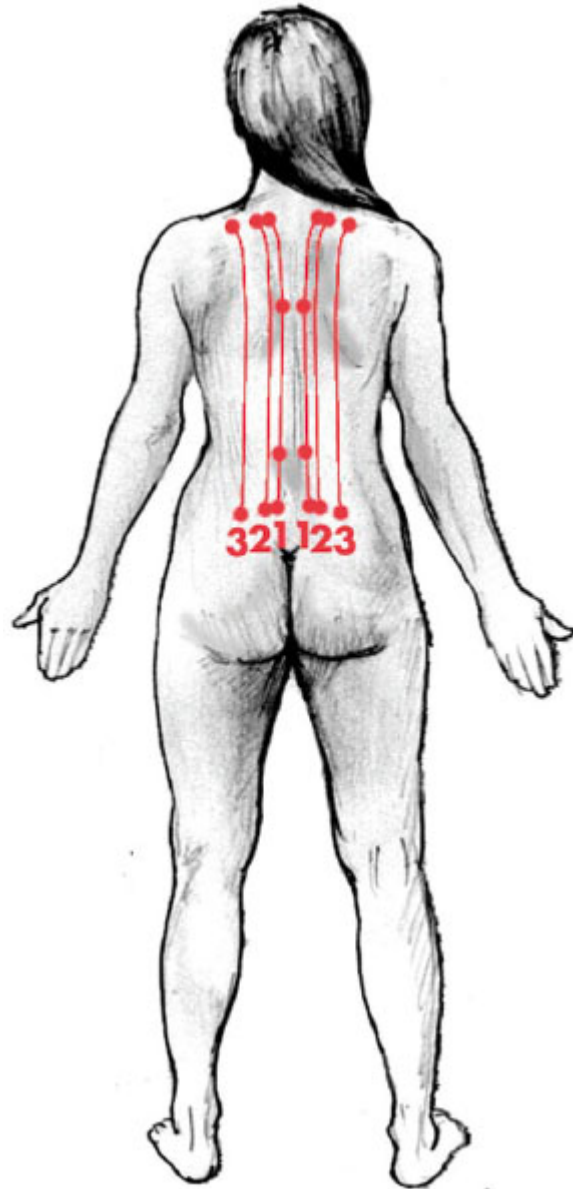
What is Thai Massage?

Thai Massage, Thai yoga massage, and Thai yoga therapy are names commonly used in the West to refer to a traditional massage modality that is native to Thailand. It is known in the country of its origin as *nuat phaen boran* (“traditional style massage”) or *nuat thai* (“Thai Massage”). Based on a combination of influences from India, China, and indigenous Thai traditions, this art form has been handed down through the generations mostly via oral tradition, and is practiced today across Thailand in various forms. Thai Massage has now become extremely popular in the West, and has been among the fastest growing massage modalities in America over the past decade. *Massage Magazine*, *Yoga Journal*, and other industry-leading consumer and professional magazines have frequently featured Thai Massage in their pages.

A COMPLETE THAI MASSAGE incorporates a combination of acupressure and yoga-like stretching. Thai Massage is different from many Western forms of massage in that there is no oil used, the therapist uses a mattress on the floor (instead of a massage table), and the client remains completely clothed throughout the session. It is so different from what we typically think of as “massage” that it is often instead described as having someone “do yoga to you.”

In modern Thailand, traditional massage is both a complex theoretical science, and an informal art form practiced by men and women throughout all levels of society. At one end of the spectrum, Thai Massage is a medical discipline, part of a four-year traditional medical degree program. At the other, it is practiced in many villages by healers who have learned orally without much theoretical background, or informally among family members.

Thai Massage is directly related to yogic principles originating in India. It is also in many ways similar to Chinese massage techniques such as shiatsu and reflexology insofar as it is based on the theory of the flow of energy along lines or channels that run throughout the body. Thus, even when treating a disease or injury associated with a particular area, a therapist will typically work on acupuncture points throughout the body.



Some *sen* and acupressure points on the back side of the body.

In Thailand, Thai Massage is considered to be energy work rather than bodywork. This is because the traditional Thai Massage therapist is guided not by anatomical structures or physiological principles but by following an intricate network of 72,000 *sen* (a Thai word meaning “pathways” or “lines”) throughout the body. Acupressure points are found along these *sen*, which are used by the Thai Massage therapist to stimulate or relax the body’s energy (*lorn*), affecting the patient’s mind and body and promoting the

natural healing process. The sen are of central importance to Thai Massage theory: even the yoga-like postures and other stretching that are an integral part of Thai Massage are considered primarily for their effects on the energy lines, and only secondarily for their ability to improve flexibility and strength.

Thai Massage can be varied to suit a wide range of physical needs, is suitable for clients of all ages and abilities, and can complement any level of exercise or activity. Although this art form was not developed with modern medical influence, scientific research on Thai Massage has begun to demonstrate that this form of massage has measurable physiological benefits. Clinical trials have shown that Thai Massage can prevent bone degeneration, decrease stress, treat back pain, and contribute to psychological well-being. (See the current state of medical research on Thai therapies in the Thai Institute of Healing Arts' interactive forum www.thai-institute.net.) In Thailand today, Thai Massage is used as a form of physical therapy to aid in the increase of range of motion and muscular strength. Areas of ongoing research include Thai Massage's ability to improve circulation, flexibility, and muscle tone. This blend of acupressure and stretching is also said by its advocates to be especially beneficial for those who find themselves stiff, sore, and tired from overexertion in work or sports, or from arthritis or other disorders affecting mobility.

Of course, therapists must recognize the limitations of Thai Massage, as well. In such cases as disease of the internal organs, chronic injuries, and degenerative conditions, the effects of the massage are difficult to gauge. Within the Traditional Thai Medical approach to healing, the most important function of Thai Massage is to stimulate the body's energy and natural healing process; thus, it may be a valuable complementary therapy alongside virtually any other form of treatment. It is unrealistic, however, to expect any massage to be a panacea, and even in Thailand, it is acknowledged that it is dangerous to rely on massage in lieu of proper medical attention. Although the benefits of Thai Massage are wonderful indeed, under no circumstances should massage clients with serious

physical problems forego consultation and treatment by a qualified medical professional before embarking on a course of therapy involving Thai Massage.

History of Thai Massage

Much progress has been made in research on the history of Thai medicine since the first edition of this book was published, and I have published an entire book on this called *Traditional Thai Medicine: Buddhism, Animism, Ayurveda*.¹ The history of Thai Massage, like that of Traditional Thai Medicine, is complicated by the fact that few historical sources remain from prior to the 1800s. Due both to willful destruction by invading armies and the damaging effects of the tropical climate on perishable materials, Thai medical texts from the premodern period are virtually nonexistent. Nevertheless, from a close examination of the modern practice of Thai Massage, we can determine that it combines at least five important layers of historical influence:



A temple guardian, Wat Phra Kaew (Bangkok).

LAYER 1: Buddhism

Many Thai medical texts incorporate doctrines about the body, disease, and healing from Theravada Buddhist texts that date to the last few centuries BC. In the modern practice of Thai Massage, influential Buddhist ideas include a concern with ethics, an emphasis on compassion, the practitioner's attention to breath and body sensations, and the celebration of the role of Jivaka Komarabhacca as the forefather of the art form. These are all discussed further later in this chapter.

LAYER 2: Ayurveda

Closely related to Buddhism, Ayurvedic medical ideas travelled alongside the religion as it spread from India to all parts of Asia. Traditional Thai

Medical texts frequently contain references to principles such as the *doshas* and the Four Elements (Earth, Water, Fire, and Air). Discussed in more detail later in this book, the idea of the body being animated and mobilized by *lom* (which is usually translated as “energy,” but which literally means the Air Element) draws from a traditional Indian model of physiology.



Statues of *luesii* performing yoga-like exercises adorn the grounds of Wat Pho (Bangkok).

LAYER 3: Yoga

The form of yoga most familiar to Western students is *hatha yoga*, an energy-based physical and spiritual practice originating in India. Now found in many Western health clubs and private studios, this system of postures and breathing exercises was formalized in the first half of the second millennium AD, primarily as a spiritual practice. A similar system of individual postures exists in Thailand that is called *luesii dat ton* (“self-stretching exercises of the *rishis*”). This form of yoga seems to have exerted a

profound influence on Thai medical arts, particularly in the realm of Thai Massage. The connections between Thai Massage postures and yoga postures are explored in detail in Chapter 4 of this book. Additionally, while there is no system of *chakras* in Thai Massage, several of the Thai energy lines, or *sen*, have clear parallels with the *nadi* channels from the Indian yogic tradition, sometimes even sharing the same names.

LAYER 4: Chinese and other external cultural influences

In some of my other books, I have explored in detail other cultural influences on Thai medicine, ranging from Chinese medicine to Khmer magical practices. In terms of Thai Massage, the most significant of these is the influence of Chinese medicine. Many Thai Massage schools today teach modified forms of foot reflexology, *tuina* abdominal massage, and other Chinese bodywork practices. While some of these are relatively late introductions to the Thai sphere, Chinese communities have been flourishing in Southeast Asia for many centuries and have introduced many aspects of Chinese culture to Thailand. Some of the similarities between the Thai *sen* and the Chinese meridians, as well as some acupressure techniques, may be due to this prolonged cultural contact and exchange.

LAYER 5: Indigenous Thai medicine

This is by far the most pervasive layer of cultural influence in Thai healing practices of all sorts, and Thai Massage is no exception. The practice of Thai Massage as we know it today clearly incorporates a wide variety of indigenous Thai healing arts — from a practice of walking on the back known as *yam kaeng*, to bone-setting (an indigenous form of chiropractics), to *tok sen* (tapping specific points on the body with a wooden mallet). Of course, it is also through the indigenous culture that all external influences have been received and interpreted.



A healer's altar in Chiang Mai combines most of the cultural influences on Thailand, including images of Jivaka, the Chinese Buddhist deity Guanyin, and an assortment of amulets and magic charms.

While there have been many foreign inputs, the Thai healing arts are distinctly Thai and a unique part of Thailand's cultural heritage. If these five layers of cultural influence form the building blocks of Thai Massage therapy, different schools and teachers all over the country have put them together in highly individualized ways. Some teachers emphasize one "layer" over the other, omitting or including aspects as they see fit. In actuality, each practitioner draws from the available menu of options to create his/her own unique style of Thai Massage.

Outside the major cities, Thai Massage tends to be nonscholarly and to rely on informal methods of education. Local practices tend to vary considerably from village to village, and are offered by healers who are more akin to shamans, astrologers, or magicians than to learned physicians. Their medical knowledge is handed down largely orally or through secret manuscripts passed from teacher to pupil, and is usually not shared with outsiders — especially not with Westerners. According to the few anthropologists who have been able to research these rural traditions, local village medicine is typically composed of indigenous Thai traditions.² These aspects of healing were in existence prior to the arrival of ideas from India,

depend almost entirely on pre-Buddhist animist beliefs, and are very different from the system discussed in this book.

In contrast, a more formalized medical tradition, which emphasized Indian cultural influence, developed in association with the royal courts in the capital, first located at Ayutthaya (1351-1767) and then at Bangkok (1768-pres-ent). This tradition of Thai medicine greatly emphasized written texts and formal education. Elements of Indian medicine are evident in the earliest Traditional Thai Medical texts still extant today - medical scriptures written on palm leaves in the 17th century - but these texts do not directly indicate when these ideas arrived, or by what means. Massage is mentioned in texts from the Ayutthaya period and in eye-witness accounts by foreign emissaries to the court in the same period, but unfortunately too little detail is given in these sources to reconstruct historical practices with any accuracy.

The earliest major source of technical information on Thai Massage is a series of artifacts dating to the 1830s. These were produced at the Bangkok temple Wat Phra Chetuphon Vimol-mangklararm Rajwaramahaviharn, commonly called “Wat Po,” which served as the national temple in the 19th century. Within a “medical pagoda” still standing on the temple grounds are 60 diagrams etched in marble (30 depicting the front of the body, and 30 the back). These stone tablets show a complex system of energy lines and points, evidence of the high degree to which acupressure therapy had been systematized by that time. Additionally, a series of small statues built at the same time depict *luesii* (i.e., *rishis* or sages) performing individual yoga poses and giving each other massage.

Unfortunately, all but one of the statues showing massage have deteriorated over time. However, manuscripts that accompanied the statues can still be consulted to ascertain the medical purpose of each massage step.

³ Currently, Wat Po has undertaken an effort to rebuild the statues with modern materials.

It is clear from looking at the tablets, statues, and the associated medical texts produced at the same time that healers affiliated with the royal court had much more exposure to, and enthusiasm for, Ayurvedic and yogic ideas than those in the villages. That being said, it is difficult to ascertain the historical importance of the Wat Po materials.



Stone tablet depicting massage lines and points, Wat Po (Bangkok).



Medical pagoda on the grounds of Wat Po (Bangkok).

Tellingly, the statues and tablets have little connection with the practices and routines taught at Wat Po's massage school today. It is possible that at one point they served as the basis for actual practice. But if they did, it would only have been a small minority of Thai healers nationally who would have had the access and literacy to utilize them.

The take-away point from this brief discussion of the history of Thai Massage is that there is no single source or simple timeline for the development of the forms of massage taught at the Thai Massage schools in modern Thailand. Nor is there any one style of Thai Massage that is demonstrably more ancient or authentic than others. Until recently, the practice of massage, like many aspects of traditional medicine in Thailand, was unregulated and unorganized. Individual practitioners and teachers developed individual blends of therapeutic practices based on their exposure to and interest in Thailand's many cultural influences. Even with the codification of massage and medicine at the royal court, the practice of individuals in the regions of Thailand remains to this day largely a matter of personal preference and local custom.

The Old Medicine Hospital and the Shivagakomarpaj Lineage

Since its construction in the 19th century, the Wat Po temple in Bangkok has retained its importance as a traditional medical facility. Housing the ancient stone tablets, the temple has been a repository for healing techniques — something like a medical library of traditional herbalism and massage. At one time, massage was practiced at Wat Po by the resident monks. Today, this is no longer the case. However, the temple continues to be the site of one of the most respected Thai Massage and herbal medicine schools in the country, which offers courses for Thais and Western tourists.

Most Western students who have studied in Thailand have not done so at Wat Po. Rather, most have attended one of the many schools in Chiang Mai, the major city in northern Thailand. Chiang Mai has billed itself as a “hub” for medical tourism, the spa industry, and traditional medicine. Over the late 1990s and 2000s, the number of tourists and travelers appearing in Chiang Mai ballooned, leading to an explosion in the number of Thai Massage schools. These days, schools of all sizes and shapes are to be found in the city, each promoting a slightly different curriculum in Thai Massage. The quality of education at such schools tends to vary, depending on the integrity and knowledge of the director and individual teachers on staff.

For many decades, the Thai Massage School Shivagakomarpaj, a traditional medicine hospital and school, has been the most influential institution for traditional medical studies in Chiang Mai. This school, affectionately known by its Western students as the “Old Medicine Hospital,” was founded in the 1960s under the directorship of a Traditional Thai Medicine doctor named Ajahn (“Master”) Sintorn Chaichakan.⁴

Ajahn Sintorn first pursued his education in Traditional Thai Medicine at Wat Po in the late 1950s. In 1958, he graduated at the top of his class, staying on as a teacher for four more years. Before that time, Wat Po did not teach Thai Massage, but at the personal request of the king, Ajahn Sintorn was instrumental in starting the massage program to complement the herbal training Wat Po had offered for many years.

In 1962, Ajahn Sintorn returned to Chiang Mai and began to practice medicine at small dispensaries on the grounds of several city temples. At this time, the government of Thailand was only interested in supporting Western medicine, and Thai traditions were kept alive by their association with Buddhist institutions. Living in the north of Thailand, Ajahn Sintorn adapted his practice of massage and herbal medicine to incorporate aspects of northern culture. One important change he made to his massage style was to slow it down — as he said, to suit the “laid-back style” of Chiang Mai natives. He also focused on local herbal knowledge, incorporating treatments that were not part of the Wat Po tradition into his pharmacopoeia.



Ajahn Sintorn leads the *wai khru* ceremony at the Old Medicine Hospital, 2001.

In 1973, Ajahn Sintorn purchased land just outside downtown Chiang Mai center and established the current facility. With only a small grant from the government to start up, the institution was quite small at that time, with only 10 inpatient beds. From these humble beginnings, the “Old Medicine Hospital” grew to the current size.

By the 1990s, the school was graduating an average of 60-70 Thai students per year in Traditional Thai Medicine and Western students of Thai Massage numbered well into the hundreds. At the turn of the millennium, the Old Medicine Hospital became an integral part of the national accreditation system that today regulates massage education and practice in Thailand. Ajahn Sintorn remained the director of the Old Medicine Hospital facility until he passed away on October 18, 2005. His son, Ajahn Wasan Chaichakan, and his nephew, Mr. Parawat Pongpiam, are the current directors.

The influence of the Old Medicine Hospital is even greater than its enrollment numbers may suggest, as many of the schools operating in Chiang Mai have unofficial connections to the institution. Over the years, individuals who trained as Thai practitioners at the hospital went on to start their own schools. Thus, many of the establishments in the area teach essentially the same techniques and theory as taught at the Old Medicine Hospital. As a result, the massage routine crafted by Ajahn Sintorn has become the signature style of Northern Thailand, and is often referred to by Westerners as “Northern Style Thai Massage.”

Many of those in the Chiang Mai area and beyond recognize Ajahn Sintorn as the source of their knowledge and look to the Old Medicine Hospital as the head of their lineage. As in many Asian arts, lineage is considered an important element of Thai Massage instruction, as an indication of authenticity and a mark of high quality.

For most practitioners and teachers in Thailand, lineage membership is considered crucial, as it indicates that the practitioner is a participant in an authentic and established tradition of Thai Massage. Those tracing their

lineage to the Old Medicine Hospital are collectively known as the “Shivagakomarpaj Lineage.”

Just as important as prestige and authenticity is the personal connection a lineage provides with the teacher of a particular style or form of Thai Massage, even after his death. For example, although Ajahn Sintorn passed away in 2005, many of his students have continued to honor his memory as the founder of their lineage by including him in the *wai khru* ceremonies honoring the teachers. This personal connection has become increasingly important for non-Thai students as they have returned to their countries of origin and established schools and personal practices. By becoming part of an established Thai lineage, individuals living outside Thailand can maintain a meaningful connection to the teachers back in Thailand.



***Wai khru* ceremony honoring the Buddha, Jivaka, and Ajahn Sintorn at Thai Institute of Healing Arts, Arlington VA (USA).**

The book you are holding in your hands is a book about Shivagakomarpaj Lineage Thai Massage. It is almost entirely based on the teachings at the Old Medicine Hospital — in particular, on the massage curriculum being taught at the school in the mid- to late 1990s. I have done my best to represent accurately Thai Massage as I learned it at the Old Medicine Hospital, while occasionally adding my own interpretation or explanation in order to clarify a particular question. Many of the differences between the massage sequence in this book and others on the market that introduce basic Thai Massage

routines can be ascribed to the differences between Ajahn Sintorn's teachings and those of other teachers. When comparing books written by other authors, the routines and other details may not match exactly. It is not that one book is right and another is wrong; it is just that such discrepancies should be understood as unique facets of the Shivaga-komarpaj Lineage. It is essential to determine the ultimate source or lineage of the material presented in any book in order to evaluate its authenticity and compatibility with other teachings.

Thai Massage Styles and Diversity of Practices

Even with the existence of formal structures such as lineages and schools, Thai Massage is still a very diverse art form in the country of its origin. Westerners typically speak of there being two distinct styles of Thai Massage, one predominating in the North of the country and one in the South. Indeed, there are some readily observable differences between the more laid-back and gentle massage of the Shivaga-komarpaj Lineage style that predominates in Chiang Mai (called by many Westerners the “Northern Style”), and faster and more intense styles found elsewhere (called by Westerners the “Southern Style”). Making such distinctions enables aspiring Thai Massage students to identify what makes the style of an individual teacher or school unique and more attractive. (More on this in Chapter 6.) However, the North-South distinction is not one that is recognized by most Thai people across the country.

There is one distinction made among Thai practitioners that is historically clear-cut and universally recognized: the difference between the Royal and Commoner Styles of massage. The Royal Style (or *nuat rajchasumnak*), developed at court in response to the need to be more

respectful of the bodies of members of the Thai royalty, requires avoiding the use of the feet, limits physical contact between practitioner and client, eliminates stretching, and follows other specific protocols seen as being more respectful. The Commoner Style (or *nuat chaloeyseuk*), on the other hand, follows a more relaxed approach with regard to contact of bodies between the client and practitioner, incorporates pressure with the feet and stretching, and allows for a broader range of positions and techniques. The current Thai Massage curriculum prevailing at most schools in Thailand consists of a blend of techniques derived from both of these styles.

These are generalizations. In most cases, style is considered to be a personal trait of an individual practitioner or teacher. Differences are subtle and may be indistinguishable to the untrained eye; however, no two practitioners perform Thai Massage exactly the same way. Even when remaining true to the teachings he or she has received within a particular lineage, each therapist develops a personal style over time that is a product of his or her own therapeutic experience, physical abilities, and personal preferences. Practitioners in Thailand often combine techniques from many different teachers or traditions, sometimes mixing Thai Massage with Burmese, Chinese, Hill-Tribe, or even Swedish massage. Massage methods thus vary from village to village, special techniques are treasured from family to family, and routines vary from individual to individual. This means that very distinct styles of massage come under the rubric of “Thai Massage.”

In 1985, an alliance of government agencies and private associations formed the Reviving Traditional Thai Massage Project in order to promote the education, practice, and profession-alization of Thai Massage. Largely due to the efforts of the project, in 2004, Thailand began officially regulating Thai Massage practitioners and education under the auspices of the Ministry of Public Health. The goals of both the Reviving Traditional Thai Massage Project and the Ministry of Public Health have included standardizing the spa and massage therapy industries, as well as creating a national Thai Massage curriculum. It remains to be seen what the long-term effect of such a movement will be. One unfortunate outcome is likely to be the loss of a

large part of the oral traditions and the rural practices that make up the colorful diversity of Traditional Thai Medicine. However, much benefit has already begun to come out of these efforts in terms of quality control, educational standards, and safety. Additionally, the renewed support for Thai Massage from the Thai government is probably responsible for the huge international success of the practice in recent decades.

Spirituality in Thai Massage Practice

Thailand is a religiously devout country, where the casual observer can readily see a deep and extensive Buddhist influence on everyday life at all levels of society. In many parts of Thailand, Buddhist monks are central in the practice of healing, offering amulets, magical charms, incantations, and exorcisms to cure and protect their patients. Even while these practices may harken back to pre-Buddhist shamanism or animism, the imagery of the rites of rural medicine are Buddhist, the language of the incantations is composed largely of Buddhist phrases, and the location of these healings are usually community temples.

Buddhism and medicine have always been intimately interlinked in Thailand — as they have been in other parts of Asia for millennia. In fact, it was the spread of multiple waves of Buddhism that carried many herbal, Ayurvedic, and yogic therapies to Thailand from India in the first place. More recently, monasteries throughout Thailand have served as important medical resources. Institutions such as Wat Po and Wat Mahathat (another temple in Bangkok) continue to do so today.

At the center of the Thai healer's spiritual practice is Jivaka Komarabaccha (usually spelled in Thailand as “Shivago Komarapat” or “Shivagakomarpaj”), who is revered as the progenitor of the traditional

medical system. Buddhist historian Kenneth Zysk recounts the story of Jivaka's early life, as told in the Pali-language scriptures of Theravada Buddhism:

Salavati, a courtesan of Rajagaha, [gave] birth to a son who was then given to a slave woman, who placed him in a winnowing basket, which was thrown on a rubbish heap... The infant is taken and raised by the king's son Abhaya. The boy is given the name Jivaka because he was "alive" (from the root *jiv*, to live), and because a prince cared for him he is called Komarabhacca ("nourished by a prince"). Jivaka, as he approached the age at which he must seek his own livelihood, decided to learn the medical craft. Hearing about a world-famous physician in Taxila, he traveled to that city, famous for education, to apprentice with the eminent doctor. After seven years of medical study, he took a practical examination that tested his knowledge of medicinal herbs, passed with extraordinary success, and, with the blessings of his mentor, went off to practice medicine. ⁵

Jivaka is a minor figure in Buddhist scripture, but this story appears in various forms in Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan translations in other Buddhist traditions around Asia. All versions of the scriptures agree that Jivaka later became a Buddhist convert and volunteered his time as the physician of the monastic order. The Pali version of the tale states that at one point he even treated the Buddha himself for a problem of the *doshas* (Ayurvedic humors).



A devotional statue of Jivaka on the grounds of Wat Phra Kaew (Bangkok).

In many parts of the Buddhist world Jivaka has largely been forgotten, but in Thailand he has been elevated to the level of a quasi-deity. Jivaka is believed by most Thai healers to be the ultimate source of Thai traditional pediatric medicine, and the inventor of many of the practices of Thai herbalism and massage. (Other medical heroes, such as the *luesii*, are also credited with making specific contributions.) During my own time studying in Thailand, without exception, every healer I visited possessed a statue or image of Jivaka, seated or standing on the altar alongside the Buddha and other figures in recognition of his position as the practitioner's primary *ajahn* (teacher or master). This was the case equally for unlicensed, unofficial practitioners of hereditary forms of rural medicine and for formally trained practitioners and teachers at Chiang Mai's many clinics and schools.

Jivaka's statue is also placed in prominent locations in many monasteries and temples, including Thailand's national temple, Wat Phra Kaew, in Bangkok. Healers pray to Jivaka for help in their work of healing, and patients often pray for a cure. Jivaka is said to benevolently intercede on a

patient's behalf, and is also said to transmit healing through the hands of the traditional Thai healer.

While most massage therapists have faith in the knowledge they possess and the techniques they perform, they put even more stock in the ability of Jivaka to guide their hands during the massage. Healers kneel at their clients' feet with folded hands and closed eyes and ask the "Father Doctor" for guidance in order to prepare themselves before each massage. While working, many practitioners feel themselves to be channels for Jivaka rather than healers in their own right. For the true master, then, every movement of Thai Massage is an exercise in meditation and piety.

Many traditional Thai Massage schools teach as their first lesson some version of the chant that appears in Appendix 1 at the back of this book. In most Thai schools, this chant is repeated every day in a ceremony known as *wai khru*, or "honoring the teacher." At the Old Medicine Hospital, for example, it is chanted twice a day by the entire hospital staff, teachers, and students. Even at this prestigious secular facility, Jivaka's ceremony is quite elaborate. It incorporates Buddhist rites and reaffirms the central role of Buddhist tradition in the practice of Thai Traditional Medicine. In fact, one of the main teachings of the Old Medicine Hospital is that spirituality is one of the three major disciplines of Thai Traditional Medicine, alongside herbalism and massage.

Another example of the spiritual nature of the practice of Thai Massage is apparent in the various types of initiation ceremonies required by Thailand's massage schools. Many teachers stand by a timeless tradition of initiation before the teaching may be imparted. Some of my Chiang Mai teachers asked me to bring nine fresh lotus flowers and nine sticks of incense or another suitable offering to perform a ceremony at their altar, formally entering into a student-teacher relationship. (Nine is a symbolically important number in Thailand due to its association with Buddhism.) Equally noteworthy are the graduation ceremonies, which often include chanting, consecration of diplomas, and a binding of the students' wrists with sacred thread.

Ethics in Thai Massage

The most basic ethical code observed traditionally in Thailand, regardless of one's profession, is the Five Precepts of Buddhism. These are said to have been laid down by the Buddha to encourage harmony and peace among humankind and to avoid the production of negative karma. These principles are followed by Buddhists worldwide, and are translatable roughly as:

- Refrain from killing any living being
- Refrain from taking what is not yours
- Refrain from sexual activity that is harmful to self or others
- Refrain from dishonesty in speech and action
- Refrain from intoxication with drugs and alcohol

Buddhism traditionally emphasizes humility, honesty, and compassion, and encourages the devout to practice these virtues in everyday life and livelihood. The practitioner of Thai Massage is no exception to this. Even non-Buddhist practitioners of the Thai healing arts should ensure, at a minimum, that their healing and business practices are in accordance with these principles. In your practice, you should never harm others, cheat others, abuse your position as a healer by involving yourself sexually with clients, be dishonest or misleading, or use intoxicants while working with clients.

In addition to these timeless Buddhist guidelines, individual teachers or schools may also impose certain codes of ethics on their students. Such moral codes are designed to protect the integrity of the tradition and to protect clients from unscrupulous therapists. A set of guidelines for ethical conduct that was developed by the Thai government appears in Appendix 2. Any reputable school will require students to sign and adhere to this agreement. (For the purposes of this book, I have edited and slightly

abridged the original text so that it may be put into practice in the West). An additional set developed by the Shivagakomarpaj Lineage is also provided. Together, these two sets of guidelines protect the clients, the students, and the teachings of Thai Massage.

Despite this concern with maintaining a high ethical standard, Thai Massage has struggled in the past to escape an association with the sex industry. For many Americans in Southeast Asia, particularly during the Vietnam War era, Thai Massage became virtually synonymous with prostitution. Today, many massage clinics — particularly in Bangkok and Patthaya — continue to serve as fronts for brothels. The damage done to the Thai Massage tradition in Thailand has been paralleled in the West by a continuing association between Asian massage and prostitution. Students of mine, for example, have reported receiving calls from individuals who assume that getting a Thai Massage means receiving a “happy ending” from an Asian woman. Such racist and sexist views are not limited to Thai massage, and are an unfortunate reality of the massage industry worldwide.

Despite their reputation for being connected to sex in both Thailand and the West, most Thai Massage clinics today practice a legitimate, serious, healing art that is an important continuation of traditional medical and spiritual knowledge into modern times. This is particularly true in Chiang Mai, which has retained its deserved reputation as the most important center of traditional medicine in the country. The job of the modern Thai Massage therapist is to educate the public as to the wholesome, medical nature of the practice and to scrupulously uphold the ethical codes presented above in his or her practice.

Metta

Much of the spiritual side of Thai Massage is difficult for the Westerner to truly understand without serious immersion in the practice, due to the

barriers of language and culture that exist for the average tourist in Thailand. Moreover, Thai Massage schools catering to tourists usually downplay theoretical or spiritual teachings, concentrating instead on bodywork technique. Sometimes such decisions are made because Western students are thought not to be interested in such things.

The practice of Thai Massage is almost always taught in a Buddhist context in Thailand, but the religious practices peculiar to that country need not deter beginning students from other cultures from studying this art form. Both Thai Massage and the cultivation of *metta* are fully compatible with any spiritual tradition. The most important lesson Thai Buddhism has to offer is that it is universally desirable to make a sincere attempt to live honestly, humbly, and compassionately. Any spiritual practice that emphasizes these virtues will benefit the practice of healing by decreasing the self-centeredness of the practitioner and increasing his/her attention to and compassion for clients.



A “spirit house,” with offerings of food and drink for the well-being of spirits, is a common sight across Thailand (Koh Samui).

To be fair, some of the most important practices in Thai Massage are exceedingly difficult to learn in a short course for tourists. *Metta* is one such facet. For many Thais, the key to the art of healing — be it Thai Massage or any other type of traditional medicine — is the compassionate intention of the healer. The spiritual practices associated with Thai medicine, specifically the acts of chanting and prayer, are Buddhist methods of building humility, gratitude, and compassion in the healer and are designed to bring the practitioner to a deeper level of awareness of him- or herself and of the client. Practitioners, therefore, cultivate a state of mind called *metta*, usually translated as “lovingkindness.”

When coupled with the proper understanding of bodywork technique, the practice of *metta* will, in most cases, guide the Thai Massage therapist in performing the correct sequence of steps at the correct level of intensity, ensuring the therapy will always be positive and helpful. However, if the therapist’s mind is wandering or otherwise disengaged, if the attention is not given to the client, or the therapist’s compassionate intention to do good is absent, the massage will be nothing more than a series of physical movements. While these motions may still have some physical benefit on their own, what good they can do can only increase when the touch is infused with the conscious will to heal.

It is for this reason more than any other that the Thai Massage therapist begins his or her massage with a prayer to Jivaka. In the Western context, a prayer, a short chant, or any other way of taking a moment to center ourselves, clear our minds, and focus on compassion for our clients will work wonders for our practice and for our clients’ well-being.



Chapter 2

Before and After the Massage



The Therapeutic Environment

Although some Thai spas associated with hotels in major cities have become world-famous for the beauty and harmony of their setting, in many massage clinics in Thailand aesthetics are not given much thought. In Thailand, massages often are given while the television blares, the radio crackles, and random people shuffle in and out of the treatment room. Most clinics lack private spaces for the clients. Therapists gossip and lean over their clients to discuss their personal lives in loud voices, laughing and talking as much as massaging. It seems that Thais consider massage to be a commonplace and social facet of life, maybe akin to going to the hairdresser in our own culture.

IN CONTRAST, the therapeutic environment is a vital factor in the comfort of the Western client and, therefore, of utmost importance to the Western practitioner of Thai Massage. In the West, massage is generally considered a unique, expensive, and private experience, and practitioners must take care to ensure that their clients feel comfortable and relaxed throughout the appointment. For this reason, the space in which the therapy takes place is an important consideration. Safety, cleanliness, an uninterrupted peaceful atmosphere, soothing lighting, and neat appearance are all vital to the Western massage clinic. Other considerations particular to Thai Massage include:

Mattress

Use a thin mattress on the floor, such as a shiatsu mat or Thai Massage mat, instead of a massage table. A good Thai Massage mat will usually be a pressed-foam slab with a removable washable cover. This material is ideal because it is thin, supportive, durable, and lightweight. The best kinds of mats for Thai Massage are those that allow both the client and the practitioner to remain on the mat throughout the entire routine. Remember, the type of mat you use will partially determine how your massage feels to the client. If your mat is too stiff or too thin, as you press your client's body into the mat, it will be uncomfortable. Ensuring you have a proper mat is essential and a wise investment.



Mat for Thai Massage.

Props

Keep plenty of pillows of different sizes handy to prop up different body parts throughout the massage. Blocks used for yoga practice also make great supports, although they may be a little hard without additional padding. In the winter, keep a blanket or sheet nearby to cover the parts of the body not being worked with, particularly when using herbal compresses. You may wish to keep a chair, ceiling rope, or walker in the work space for back-walking maneuvers.

Clothing

Thai Massage is always performed fully clothed, and under no circumstances should clients disrobe. Proper attire for the client and practitioner should include light, flexible clothing such as that used for yoga class. The practitioner should keep some clean, suitable clothing on hand, in case a client comes unprepared. Thai fisherman pants (or *khang gang lay*) are commonly used in clinics in Thailand for both the client and practitioner, as they provide a comfortable fit for all body types and do not inhibit movement.

Some other optional considerations to enhance the client's experience are listed below:

Aromatherapy

You may want to use scents evocative of Thailand — such as eucalyptus, camphor, or jasmine — to enhance the work space. Thai Massage therapists often use Tiger Balm™ or other heating liniments after the massage in order to soothe muscles. If you use these or any aromatherapy products, always check with the client and take care with stronger scents, as some people may find them intrusive or may have sensitivities that preclude their use.

Music

Musical rhythms interfere with the natural rhythm of breath and movement that develops during a Thai Massage and should not be used. You can use soothing, nonrhythmic sounds, such as recordings of rain or a bubbling fountain, if it helps a client to relax and enjoy the massage. This ambient noise can also help absorb distracting sounds, such as traffic, that may enter the therapy space.

Washing

In Thailand, it is common practice for the practitioner and client to wash hands and feet before and after each massage. Basins and soap are kept nearby for this purpose. In the West, hand-washing and proper care of

bedding are recognized as key components in halting the spread of infectious diseases, and are an integral

part of any massage clinic's safety regimen. For a touch of authenticity, you may wish to provide an attractive basin with soap and water and a towel for your client.

Interviewing the Client

It is vital to interview the client before each massage. It is important to be aware of each client's symptoms and limitations, and of any possible contraindications. Even a familiar client may present different symptoms or concerns at different times. It is important to get as complete an assessment of the client's total health condition as possible, as well as to discuss specific trouble areas before beginning. On a practical note, detailed intake forms and client release forms are also required by most liability insurance companies.

You should consult a massage therapy resource (in print or online) for a liability release form appropriate for the location in which you live. Generic massage therapy intake questionnaires are also readily available. In Appendix 3, you will find a *sen* diagnostic form for specific use in therapeutic Thai Massage. You can photocopy that page, or use it as a basis to design your own form to supplement your liability release and intake forms.

The following are some general considerations to bear in mind when conducting client interviews. The answers to these questions will help you to determine the type of massage you will give each client:

Client's Age

You will have special considerations for very old and very young clients. The younger the individual, the more naturally flexible he/she will normally be. Very young clients, such as infants and toddlers, do not require acupressure or yogic stretching. These individuals should not receive more than light joint mobilization, gentle squeezing of the limbs, and superficial rubbing of the skin. By age 8-10, children may enjoy beginning full-body poses. Older clients will usually be restricted in their movements, particularly in the more advanced stretches. Elderly individuals usually cannot withstand deep presses or acupressure. They will, however, benefit greatly from the hot herbal compress massage discussed in Chapter 9.

Flexibility of Joints and Muscles

In clients of all ages, you will have special considerations for varying levels of flexibility. Most of the photos in Chapters 4 and 5 represent the ideal posture for the client. However, some alternative postures are shown throughout the book for clients who are not as flexible, or those who are extremely flexible and need more of a challenge. Always keep in mind the alignment of the ideal posture, and help your clients to work toward this goal. In time, you will see an increase in their flexibility.

Chronic Injuries, Pains, or Problems on any Part of the Body

Massage that may aggravate existing injuries should be strictly avoided.

Back Pain or Inflexibility

You may want to avoid many of the back stretches in Chapter 4. When you are working on your client's back, he or she may be more comfortable in the side position presented in Chapter 5.

Heart, Circulation, or Blood Pressure Problems

You should avoid steps that place the legs over the head, as well as all steps involving "Opening the Wind Gate."

Stress and Anxiety

You may wish to perform the massage at a slightly slower pace, with more of a relaxing intent.

Fatigue and Low Energy

You may wish to perform the massage at a slightly faster pace, with more of an energizing intent.

Food Intake

Determine if the client has eaten recently. Clients should not eat three hours prior to a massage. If they have, be sure to skip the abdominal massage. You may also have to omit some (or all) of the full-body stretches.

Menstruation

Due to abdominal distention and sensitivity, menstruating women should not receive direct pressure to this region unless the therapist is trained in this specialty and the client requests this service.

Pregnancy

Under no circumstances should pregnant women receive Thai Massage or acupressure from a therapist who is not trained in this particular specialty.

During the interview, the practitioner should also take into consideration the client's body size and shape in order to predetermine any additional props or equipment that will be needed. A small practitioner giving a massage to a very large client or a large practitioner giving a massage to a small client will present unique challenges. The skillful use of bodyweight gives therapists leverage, enabling them to handle even the most mismatched clients. This level of skill takes time and practice to perfect. When faced with any doubt as to your ability to perform specific massage steps, they should simply be avoided.

The practitioner should always use his or her judgment when delivering a Thai Massage. A very vigorous massage, the classic routine presented in this book is best suited for healthy, active clients with minor ailments such

as sore muscles or stress. Although Thai Massage can be used as rehabilitative therapy, this requires modification of the classic routine and should wait until you are trained in this specialty. Some rehabilitative considerations are presented in Part 3 of this book, but hands-on education is indispensable.

Working with Specific Conditions

While performing a therapeutic Thai routine, you may run across specific conditions that will affect your approach to the massage. Different clients will present different abilities and challenges for you as a therapist. The object when working with any type of physical limitation is to keep in mind the ideal posture, and to aim for this with your clients, while always respecting their limitations. You will need to keep their movements within their range of ability, while encouraging them to expand their boundaries. Clients who receive regular massage usually find their range of motion increasing and symptoms such as pain and stiffness lessening, and often many chronic and acute disorders can be improved over the long term.

The following are some considerations for working with specific conditions with Thai Massage. In all cases, remember to use common sense, client feedback, and *metta* as your guides. More detailed therapeutic information is presented in Part 3 of this book:

For AH Pain and Mobility Issues

Hot compresses used throughout the massage can often increase the client's flexibility and lessen pain and other adverse symptoms. In most cases, compresses enable such clients to enjoy a therapy session. (See Chapter 9 for more details on herbal compresses.)

Arthritis (or other joint stiffness)

This client will obviously need special care for most of the classic routine steps. It is essential to take clients to their limit gradually, slowly increasing intensity. Do not over-tax the joints. If the client experiences pain, ease off immediately. Hot compresses may be used instead.

Chronic Pain or Fibromyalgia

Many of the more advanced stretches in this book will be contraindicated. Only stretch the client within his or her limitations. Herbal compresses may be used instead of thumb pressure.

Back, Hip, or Sacroiliac Pain

Concentrate on steps that involve loosening the hamstrings and psoas muscles. Do not allow the client to become overexerted, and be sure to skip the advanced stretches.

Lower Gastrointestinal Complaints

These clients may benefit from forward bends and spinal twists, which may help to expel gas and promote digestion and excretion. Be careful with direct abdominal pressure, although in some cases Step 56 may provide relief of symptoms.

Upper Gastrointestinal Complaints

These clients usually will not benefit from forward bends or spinal twists, which may aggravate acid reflux or ulcers. Do not apply direct abdominal pressure.

Respiratory Disease

Such clients may feel constricted or congested while lying down. You may wish to prop them up on a pillow. Perform seated variation from Chapter 5, and focus on flushing the chest and abdominal region.

Menstruation, Post Partum, Obesity

Perform back massage from the side position in order not to put too much pressure on the abdomen.

Kidney Disease

Beware of stressing the lower back with intense stretches. Do not press directly on the kidneys (located along back line 3).

A more sophisticated approach to the treatment of specific conditions is to find the *sen* associated with the symptoms and to treat the line accordingly. Refer to Chapters 6–8 for more information on therapeutic use of the *sen*.

Observing Thai Cultural Protocols

A Thai Massage therapist will always want to familiarize him/herself with Thai cultural protocols prior to embarking on a Thai Massage. These considerations are nearly universal in Thai Massage clinics, and are as much a marker of “authenticity” as the massage techniques themselves. Many of these protocols have to do with the Thai idea that the head is sacred and that the feet are disrespectful. You will find these protocols are extremely important to ensure comfort when working with clients from Thailand or other Asian countries. Also, by following Thai cultural customs any practitioner will develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of the richness of this healing art. While many Westerners may not share these cultural ideas, they still may feel something is amiss if you do not follow these protocols (such as if you use your feet to massage their head or don’t wash your hands before beginning the work). Organizing your massage space well with these principles in mind will allow you to adhere to Thai cultural protocols, which demonstrates your respect for your client:

Setting up an altar in your workspace

If you choose to have an altar in your workspace, you should to adhere to the important traditions on how to treat a Buddha statue. The main Buddha image should face East or North. Since it is common for a massage clinic to have clients dressing and undressing, you will need to have a curtain to seal off the altar space during these activities and reopened when all individuals are fully clothed. (For more information on setting up a Thai Buddhist altar, see the third book in this series, *Spiritual Healing in Traditional Thailand*.)

Respect your client's head

Set up your space so that during the massage you will not need to go behind or reach over the head to get supplies. If you have an altar in your workspace, orient the client's mat in such a way that his or her head is pointing toward it.

Don't step over the client's body

If you need to get from one side of the client to the other, don't step over the body. Set up your space so that there is enough room for you to walk around by the feet.

Don't use your feet near the face or head.

Think through your massage steps and body positions so that you avoid using your feet near the face or head.

Don't use your feet to flip the client

Always take the time to stop and use your hands to carefully and respectfully move the client into a new position.

Don't drape yourself or sit on your client

With very few exceptions for particular steps shown in this book, you should avoid resting your body on the client's.

Clean hands and feet prior to massage

This is both hygienic and a gesture of respect for your client.

At the most basic level, these protocols are about mindfulness of your client's well-being and comfort. These are also considerations for the integrity of the client's energy system. Being ever mindful of your environment and interactions with clients will ensure that you always treat your clients' physical, mental, and energetic equilibrium as your top priority.

After the Massage

Sometimes, despite the best intentions of the practitioner, the client or the practitioner may experience an energy imbalance after a Thai Massage. Often, this is indicated by a feeling of being “wired” or hyperactive with accompanying insomnia, or conversely by a feeling of sluggishness, lethargy, and exhaustion. The causes of these energy imbalances can be numerous.

If it is the client that is feeling this way, this situation could be due to an uneven massage. Perhaps both sides of the body were not treated equally, or the entire body was not massaged. Not following the Four Principles of Thai Massage introduced in Chapter 3 may also cause imbalance.

Imbalance may also be caused by emotional release experienced during the massage, and thus may represent a positive development. Many people respond quite dramatically to massage, especially if they are unaccustomed to being touched in such a manner. Reactions such as tickling sensations, tears, sexual arousal (including erections in men), emotional outbursts, and so forth, are likely to occur — especially with new clients — and the practitioner must be prepared to meet these situations as they arise. Patience and humor can go a long way to diffuse many awkward circumstances. In most cases, the client may feel embarrassed about their involuntary reactions, but with a few kind words from the practitioner, will continue to enjoy the massage.

If it is the practitioner that is feeling imbalanced, this may be because of overexertion or exhaustion due to improper body mechanics. If done correctly, Thai Massage techniques employ the principles of physics to ensure a smooth and easy massage every time. The practitioner should not feel strained or drained. Rather, both the client and practitioner should feel invigorated and relaxed by the sequence. Perhaps more practice is needed on particular steps in order to ensure smooth performance. (If you are ever in doubt about a particular step, it is best to skip it with clients and continue to practice it privately until you are more comfortable with it.)

Imbalances experienced by the practitioner may also be caused by subconscious energetic processes. Often, practitioners will internalize the weight of their clients' emotions, taking these energies into themselves. This must be avoided as it can lead to all sorts of problems in the long run. The therapist must learn to help clients dissipate their own negative energy without contributing to it or taking it upon him/herself. The solution to this problem is the conscious intention of the practitioner to cultivate *metta*. The practitioner must always envision him/herself imparting good energy and dissolving negativity during the massage. Recognizing a source of positive energy greater than oneself (such as Jivaka) is also helpful. The practitioner will in time feel that he or she has tapped into an endless source of loving kindness, and will avoid the temptation of falling victim to clients' negativities.

Sometimes the one who needs a massage the most is the one who is always giving them. The practitioner should never neglect him/herself. Under no circumstances should a practitioner give a massage while feeling unbalanced or negative, and sometimes simply receiving a massage helps to get the therapist back on track.

Guidelines for the Client

A Thai Massage will rebalance the energy flow throughout the client's *sen* system. In order to protect the integrity of the energy work, it is recommended that the client not shower or eat for two hours after a

treatment. Both of these activities interfere with the benefits of the energy work just completed. Other than this, let the client do whatever comes naturally, such as lying down, sleeping, and so on. Providing space for clients to remain peaceful and comfortable after the massage ensures that they do not have to get up and move before they are ready.

Guidelines for the Practitioner

Energetic issues felt by the therapist are different from those felt by the client. As just mentioned, in many cases, practitioners take on negative energy from their clients, letting their own systems become imbalanced. In order to counteract this, the recommendations for the therapist are almost the opposite of those for the client. You should shower, take a sauna, eat, drink water, stretch, do some self-massage or yoga, and other self-care, or at least take a break from the massage area for at least 30 minutes, in order to recharge your batteries before starting another massage.

This is also an area that can be directly enhanced by a strong, positive, spiritual practice. Spiritual practice can teach us a healthy approach to healing, and valuable tools for taking care of ourselves. A daily tai chi, qi gong, yoga, or *luesii dat ton* (Thailand's self-stretching practice) routine can help to keep the practitioner energized and balanced, to prepare for the day's massages, and to help correct any imbalances that may arise in the course of daily work as a therapist. Practicing meditation and receiving massage can be great ways for therapists to regularly work on themselves. Also, remember that long-term energy-workers frequently need to take a short vacation from their intense work in order to rest and realign.



Chapter 3

The Fundamentals of Thai Massage



Overview of the Routine

Now that the preliminaries are out of the way, we can start on the Thai Massage routine itself. In the next two chapters we will discuss what I call the “classic” Thai Massage routine. This is the type of massage you would give to the general population — i.e., a typical client with no special needs. Once you have mastered the classic routine presented in detail in Chapter 4, you can progress to Chapter 5, where we will discuss variations and advanced moves, and from there to Part 3 of the book, where we will focus on particular techniques and considerations for clients with particular types of disabilities and ailments.

WHEN I FIRST MEET with clients who have never experienced Thai Massage and do not know what to expect, I typically tell them that Thai Massage is like “having someone do yoga and acupuncture to you at the same time.” Thai Massage is, in fact, not just a massage but an integrated yoga therapy session as well. An experienced therapist will assist clients to achieve yogic postures that they would not be able to experience on their own; at the same time, they will manipulate the muscles and tendons with the basic techniques we will discuss in a moment in order to assist with relaxation and facilitate the stretching process.

In brief, the classic routine typically is split about half and half between acupuncture and stretching, and the practiced therapist will move back and forth between the two with seamless fluidity. The routine unfolds as follows:

The therapist begins by warming up the client's body with light manipulation of the *sen* (the Thai energy lines), usually with thumb pressure. This work will segue in most cases into a routine of gentle joint mobilization. The therapist will use his or her body to gently rotate the client's limbs, to warm up the joints and to further prepare the client for the work ahead. When the preparation is deemed to be sufficient, the therapist will move into the third stage of the massage, the yoga-like stretches, which are the most intense part of the routine. Once this stage has been completed, the therapist will help the client cool down, using gentle motions designed to soothe the hard-working muscles and dissipate accumulated energies.

By following this sequence when giving a Thai Massage, you will ensure that your massage will have the flow and rhythm that is the hallmark of this unique art form. In addition to the preceding considerations, observe the Four Principles of Thai Massage listed on this page. Each of these four principles has its own rationale.

The Four Principles of Thai Massage

Thai Massage should always follow these four basic principles:

1 Always start from the extremities of the body (laterally), work toward the core of the body (medially), and then back to the extremities. This motion clears stagnated energy from the *sen*, draining from the extremities to the navel, and back out again.

2 Always start from the lowest part of the body, the feet, and move toward the top, the head. (The only exception to this rule is the front of the torso, which the practitioner drains toward the colon.) The reasons for this principle have to do with the ancient notion, shared in many Asian healing arts, that energy is purified as it moves up through the body. (You may be familiar with the Indian theory of the *chakras*, which are the quintessential examples of this general rule.)

3 Always perform *sen* work first, then joint mobilization, then stretches. This rule is important so that clients are warmed up — physically and energetically — by the time they are expected to stretch their limbs. If you are short on time or have a client with limited mobility, the full-body stretches should be considered optional. You should never, however, omit *sen* work or joint mobilization and jump directly into the stretching.

4 Give a balanced massage. Steps performed on one side should be performed on the other. Remember that the entire body should be massaged — even if only a short session is given — in order to keep the body's energies balanced. If you are just performing a foot massage, massage the hands, too, in order to bring balance to the body. Or, if you are giving a quick shoulder and neck rub, press a few acupressure points on the feet to even out the energy. The results of energy imbalance can leave your client feeling either wired or tired! (See Chapter 2.)

Basic Techniques

While the above summary may seem simple enough, there are many basic hand techniques employed by the Thai therapist throughout the course of a typical massage. These range in pressure used, and involve the precise use of body mechanics on the part of the practitioner. Beginning on the next page, these techniques are discussed one by one. To ensure that you understand the terminology used in Chapters 4 and 5, it would be best to familiarize yourself with these basics before continuing. Pay particular attention to the instructions in order to learn the principles of body mechanics from the very beginning. Establishing good habits early in your career as a Thai therapist will enable you to practice this art form over the long term without hurting yourself.



Palm Press

The palm press is the most basic technique in Thai massage. The most important factor in performing this technique correctly is that you must position your shoulders over your hands with straight arms. Always keep your back straight, your chest open, and your shoulders back and relaxed. Ensure your bodyweight is translated directly through the shoulders, elbows, and wrists. Your arms should also be straight to provide an uninterrupted flow of energy. For the “butterfly palm press” place your palms so that the fingers point away from each other (see photo). For the “pyramid palm press,” turn your fingers inward. With either option, use gravity to apply the pressure, not upper body strength. Your palms should be spread widely so that your weight is distributed over the maximum surface area. Think of the way a cat “paws” at the carpet.



Palm Circles

This is a lighter touch than the palm press, although the principles are the same. Your palms are spread out, and your fingertips are engaged. Move your fingers and palms together in a gentle circular motion. Palm circles are used to stimulate areas that are potentially sensitive, such as the abdomen and the rib cage. You are not applying your full bodyweight in this technique.



Correct

Thumb Press

The basic Thai massage method for applying acupressure, the thumb press is used mainly on muscles and sen. Never press directly on bone with a thumb press, and be sensitive to the client's threshold for pain. Thumb presses should be stimulating and strong, but not overwhelming, and should never leave bruises.

The top photo shows a correct thumb press. Proper alignment of your body includes proper placement of your shoulders directly above your hands. Keeping your elbows and wrists straight, press with the pad of your thumb, arms straight, using your bodyweight to apply pressure.

The bottom photo shows an incorrect thumb press. Note that the bend in the thumbs causes the bodyweight to have to take a 90° turn at the knuckles. This will inevitably lead to soreness, inflammation, and eventual tissue damage in the therapist's thumb and/or hand. Note that the correct method involves keeping the thumbs straight and closely in to the palm of the hand.

The pressure is always applied with the pad of the thumb, not the tip, to avoid poking the client.

Not only are there physiological reasons why this proper alignment should be observed, but also energetic reasons. Proper alignment keeps your own energy flowing uninhibited through your hands.



Incorrect



Finger Press

The finger press, or the “bladed hand,” is used when the thumb press does not provide proper leverage, or when trying to press a very thin area. Finger presses are especially used on the psoas muscle, under the clavicles, and around the sacrum. Finger presses are lighter than thumb presses, although not quite as light as finger circles. Your body should be positioned so that this movement is natural, without strain on the back or arms. Again, your bodyweight is translated through straight arms, straight wrists, and straight fingers. Like the others, this technique utilizes only bodyweight, not arm strength.



Finger Circles

Finger circles are generally used over the sensitive parts of the body, for example on the temples, skull, sacrum, and sternum. The finger circle is the lightest touch in Thai massage. Your body is positioned so that your core (your hips and waist) are positioned directly over the client. Your bodyweight is translated through straight arms, wrists, and fingers.



Forearm Roll (above)

When you want to apply more pressure than you can with the palms, the forearm roll is the next option. Your bodyweight is translated through your shoulder to your bent elbow. Be sure to perform the roll with the part of the forearm closest to the elbow. If you use the wrist, you will put strain on the elbow joint. Plus, the thicker portion of your forearm will be more comfortable for clients.

This technique is used particularly on the backs of the legs, although you can try it in other positions on clients who enjoy more pressure. The forearm roll is always executed using the practitioner's bodyweight with forward momentum.

Elbow Press (right)

The elbow press is one of the most famous Thai massage techniques. The sharp point of the elbow makes it a useful tool to apply greater pressure to acupressure points with accuracy and force. The elbow is usually used on the

hamstrings, gluteal muscles, feet, and other large muscles that tend to enjoy more pressure.

Beware of using your elbow on areas where it may cause pain or bruising. Proper alignment requires the same principles as the forearm roll. This time, however, the pressure is delivered through the tip of the elbow. Lean into your elbow to apply pressure, and slowly unbend your arm to remove the pressure. Be sure to always use your bodyweight in order not to overtax your upper body muscle strength.



Advanced Presses

The knee press, foot press, and heel press are used only in specific cases. Due to the intensity of this pressure, these techniques are usually best reserved for large, muscular clients with whom you have already established a relationship and who you know appreciate deep work.

The foot press is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, where walking on the client's back is introduced. You should be aware of safety considerations and avoid slipping or losing balance while employing these techniques. Use a nearby chair, a ceiling rope, or a walker to help you to balance.





Thai Fist (above)

The Thai Fist is used to encourage circulation to muscles, and is a good “cool-down” technique after a stretch. Curl your fingers into a loose fist with a small void in the palm of your hand. Create a flat surface between your second digit and the base of your palm. Keep your hand loose with a limp wrist, and knock the client’s muscle making a soft patting sound.

Thai Chop (right)

The Thai Chop is another cool-down move that is relaxing for worked muscles. The Thai chop seems easy, but is difficult to perform correctly. Spreading your fingers widely, press your fingertips firmly together while keeping the rest of your hand relaxed. Your palms should be cupped, lightly touching. Move your arms from the wrists, keeping your elbows outward and unmoving. Quickly but gently strike the client with your little finger, and allow the rest of your fingers to fall into place. The sound made by your fingers hitting together will be echoed by your cupped palms, and will result

in a “clacking” sound. With practice, this sound will become very loud, although the client will not feel jarred. Move the Thai chop around the muscle group to relax the entire area.

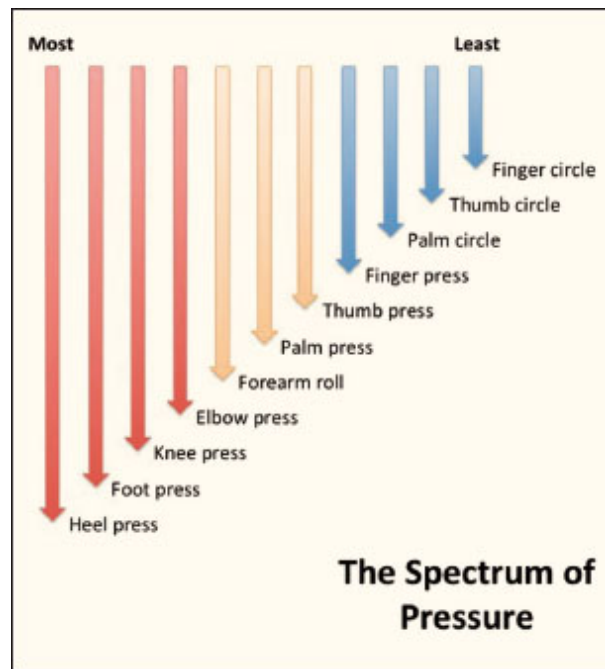


The Pain Threshold

Although Thai Massage is typically a deep form of bodywork, the basic techniques introduced on the previous pages span a range of pressure, and not all Thai work needs to be deep. In general, Thais prefer deep, forceful presses and strong stretches. There often seems to be a perception that the more pain, the better. However, this strategy will not always win over clients in the West!

With time, you will learn to feel the client's needs with your hands as you work, and you will naturally find the appropriate level of pressure for each individual. The important thing is to be aware of each client's pain threshold — the point at which you can feel their flesh tighten up under your hands. If your client is interested in relaxation, try to avoid this threshold with a lighter touch. If your client likes to be challenged, however, you can take him or her

to this threshold, or slightly beyond it. Controlled, strong work will relax the client's muscles, open up the energy flow, and improve flexibility over time.



***Sen* in the Classic Routine**

The concept of invisible energy meridians coursing throughout the body is common to most Asian medical traditions. Of these traditions, the energy meridians most well known in the West are those used in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Thai energy lines, or *sen* as they are called in Thai, do have some similarities with Chinese meridians, and they are also related to the *nadis* of the Indian tradition of yoga. However, while they have been influenced by these ideas, the *sen* are uniquely Thai. Thai Massage therapists must learn the *sen* in order to perform the techniques properly and not rely on knowledge of other traditions.

It is said in the Thai tradition that there are 72,000 *sen*. (Some sources also mention 2,700.) This number should not be taken literally, however, as it

is a way of saying “an infinite amount.” The point is that every part of the body is linked to every other part through an infinite and intricate mesh of energy. This energy is known as *prana* (Sanskrit), *chi* (Chinese), or *lom* (Thai). In Thai thinking, the *sen* make up an energy network that permeates the body of all living beings, and that vibrates in response to physiological, psychological, and spiritual experiences. According to the traditional understanding, this energy also emanates beyond the body, creating a field around the organism commonly referred to as an aura.

No one can name and diagram all of the body’s infinite energy circuits. However, 10 main *sen* are commonly taught and used in treatment by the Shivagakomarpaj Lineage. These 10 *sen* are the main conduits, or “highways,” of energy in the body, from which the rest of the *sen* branch. As a result, when they are treated, benefits emanate through the entire system.

The diagrams on the following pages show various parts of the body with the associated portions of the 10 main *sen*. (How these *sen* segments fit into the classic Thai routine is discussed in Chapter 4 at the appropriate step.)

You will note in the following *sen* diagrams some red points along each line. These are important acupuncture points that lie along each *sen*. The points will be covered in more detail in Chapter 7, when we discuss acupuncture therapy. However, I include them now as they may prove to be valuable landmarks to help you to find the *sen*. In the context of a classic Thai Massage, these acupuncture points should be treated as any other point along the *sen*. Simply run through the point with thumb presses as you move up the *sen*. However, in the context of a therapeutic massage introduced in Part 3 of this book, you will use these points to stimulate energy in particular areas of the body to treat a wide range of diseases and disorders.

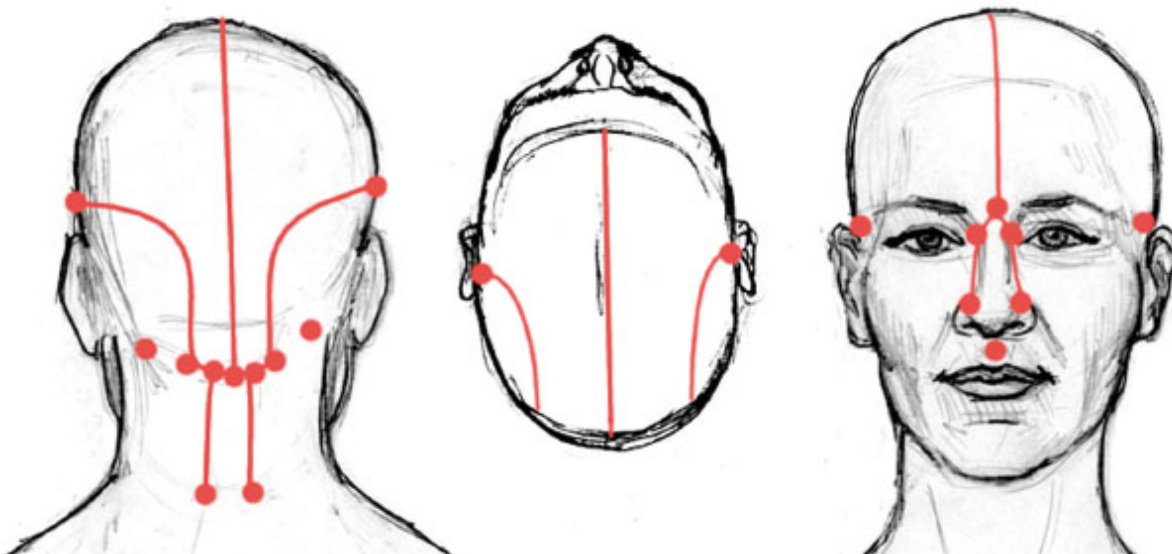
Also note the terminology used for labeling the *sen* segments in these charts. The abbreviations **o** and **i** stand for “outer” and “inner” *sen*. Thus, **ol** refers to the “first outer *sen*.” Note that there is an **ol** in the arms and an **ol** in the legs. These are not actually part of the same *sen*. The abbreviation **ol** in these cases means simply the first outer line of the arms and legs respectively.

The terminology **o1**, **o2**, **o3**, etc., will be used as a shorthand throughout the rest of this book to refer to specific portions of the *sen* we will encounter during the classic routine introduced in Chapter 4.

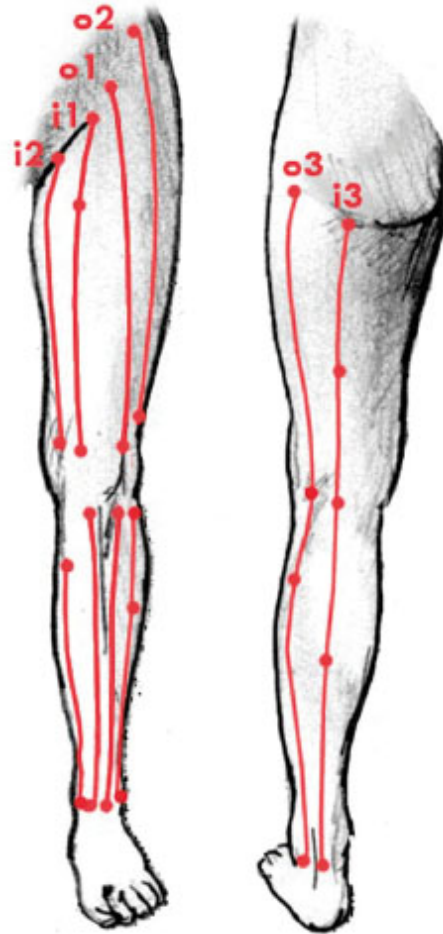
While anatomy is not usually a significant part of traditional training programs in Thai Massage, for the purposes of conveying information in a concise and precise manner, I have used some basic anatomical terms throughout this book.

***Sen* Segments in Head and Neck**

Two lines rise up along the neck vertebrae from the C7 vertebra to the base of the skull. These become three lines, two of which go round the head 2-3 inches behind the ear, and terminate at the temples. The third follows the midline of the head from the base of the skull, over the crown to the “third eye” notch, between the eyebrows. This line splits in two, branching along the bridge of the nose to each of the nostrils.



***Sen* Segments In Head And Neck**



Sen Segments in Legs

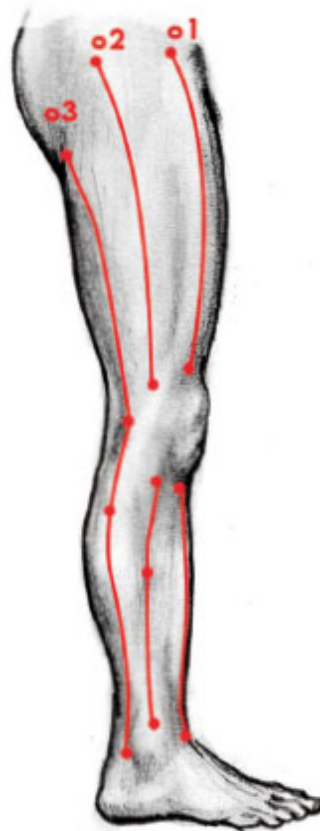
On the medial side of the leg, the first inner leg line (**i1**) runs from the ankle, along the medial side of the tibia, through the medial side of the knee, along the medial side of the femur, and ends at the top of the quadriceps. The second inner leg line (**i2**) runs from between the medial side of the ankle and the Achilles tendon, along the medial side of the calf and thigh, and ends at the groin. The third inner leg line (**i3**) runs along the posterior side of the leg from the top of the Achilles tendon, up the midline of the calf and hamstring, to end at the top of the femur.

On the lateral side of the leg, the first outer leg line (**o1**) runs from the front of the ankle, along the lateral side of the intercondylar eminence of the tibia, through the lateral side of the knee, along the lateral side of the femur, to end at the hip flexor. The second outer leg line (**o2**) runs from the outside

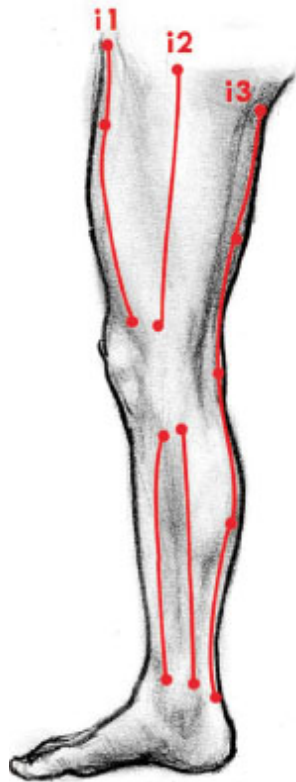
of the ankle, up the lateral side of the calf, along the tensor fasciae latae, to end at the head of the femur. The third outer leg line (**o3**) begins between the ankle and Achilles tendon, travels up the outside edge of the calf, along the lateral edge of the hamstring, to end at the gluteal crease.

Note that all lines except **i3** and **o3** skip over the knee. The lines travel through the joint itself, thus they are not worked on directly in this region. Because there is no bone on the back of the knee, the third inner and outer leg lines can be worked through the joint.

Different views of the leg are presented here to give you the best possible understanding of the course of these lines.



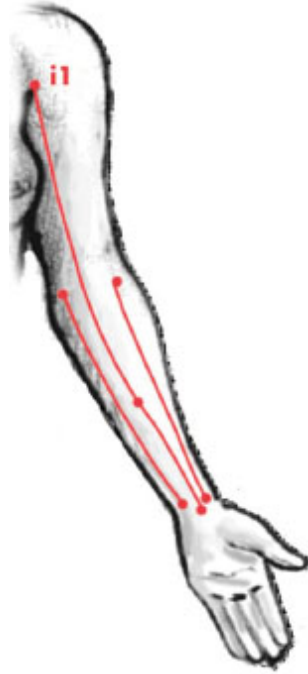
Lateral Side



Medial Side

***Sen* Segments in Arms**

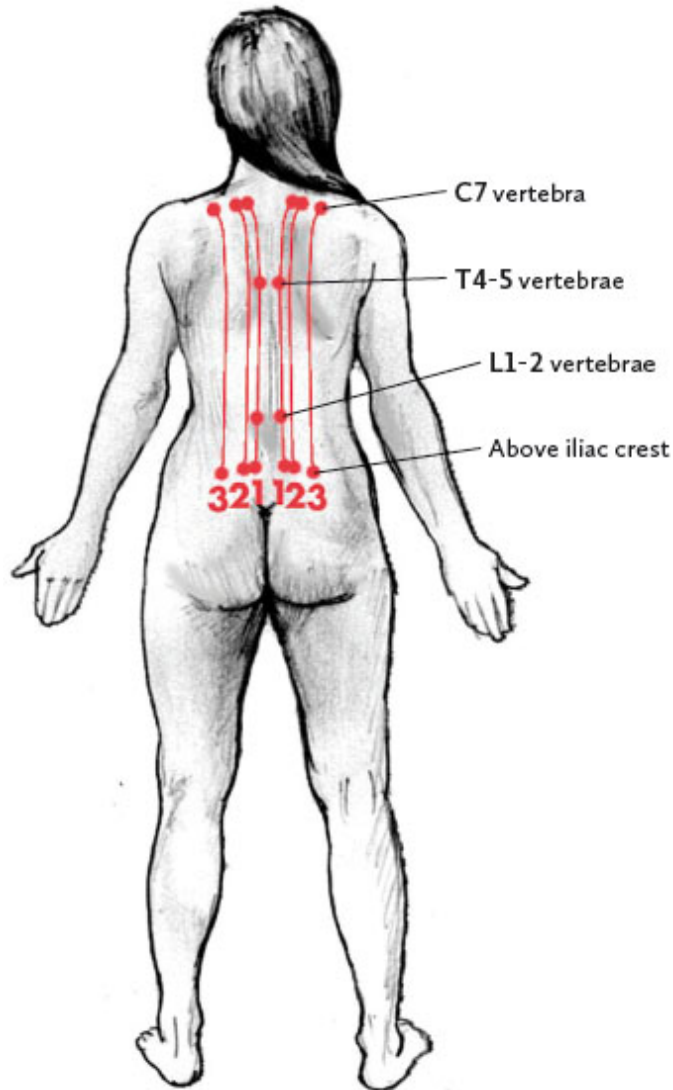
The outer arm line (**ol**) runs along the posterior side of the arm, beginning at the center of the wrist joint. It runs in between the radius and the ulna, along the medial side of the humerus, and ends at the center of the back of the shoulder on the outer edge of the scapula. The inner arm line (**il**) runs along the anterior side of the arm from the wrist joint, up the middle of the forearm, through the elbow, along the medial side of the humerus, and ends at the center of the armpit. Two branches of this line begin at the wrist and run along the medial side of the radius and ulna respectively, widening slightly before terminating at the crease in the elbow.



Front



Back



Sen Segments in the Back

The first back lines run from the sacroiliac joint, immediately alongside the spinal column, up to the C7 vertebra. Press in between each vertebra, particularly at the L1-2 and T4-5 junctions. The second back lines run from the top of the ilium about a half-inch laterally from the first back line. This line runs along the muscles to either side the spine. The third back lines run from the iliac crest alongside the lumbar fascia and iliocostalis lumbo-rum, to end above the shoulder blade. Pressure should be applied in a medial direction, gathering up the muscles on the lower portion of these lines, but when you reach the back of the rib cage, use thumb circles.

Stretching and Breathing

Thai Massage incorporates many movements that are similar to the practices of *hatha yoga* and *luesii dat ton* (Thailand's self-stretching exercise). However, unlike in those traditions, these stretches are created passively as a therapist moves the relaxed body of the client into the proper position.

Most Thais are familiar with the yogic techniques found in Thai Massage, having grown up with these methods in their cities or villages. Most Western clients, however, will be unfamiliar with them, unless they have attended yoga classes. For these clients, some explanation may be necessary before embarking on a Thai Massage. Communication is your most important tool. Be sure that your clients are fully aware of what will transpire before you place them into some of the more advanced, and potentially surprising, positions.

How intensively you perform the full-body stretches should always depend on each client's ability level, as well as the overall goals of the massage. It is the therapist's duty to recognize the first hint of pain or uncomfortable pressure in a client and to adjust to this reality immediately. That being said, both therapist and client will learn with time to determine the difference between true pain, which indicates danger, and the healthy feeling of exertion that comes from stretching and challenging the muscles.

The practitioner of Thai Massage will have to work hard to develop the ability to "hear with the hands." A Thai Massage is like a dialogue with the client's body, and the experienced therapist will be able to know the appropriate amount of pressure to use with each client. This is a sensitivity that takes a long time to develop, and until it does, a practitioner's best course of action is to hold back during a massage.

When first starting out, pay attention to the feeling of the client's limbs as you stretch them. If you are paying close attention, you will be able to feel the point at which the muscles are beginning to reach their maximum stretch.

You should encourage the muscles to stretch, but not overdo this. Improperly administered Thai Massage can and will cause muscle strain, pulled muscles, and other dangerous side effects. I always recommend that my massage students take classes in *luesii dat ton* or *hatha yoga* (particularly in an anatomically precise tradition such as Iyengar) so that they may experience first-hand the feeling of stretching, and can therefore become more empathetic and effective Thai Massage therapists. A stretching practice of your own can help you to better understand the mechanics of stretching, and to personally relate to the experiences of your clients.

Once you become adept at finding the proper level of stretch, you can assist your clients to gain flexibility and joint mobility by helping them to achieve deeper and deeper stretches. The main entrypoint for progress to this deeper level is teaching the client proper breathing. As with any yoga practice, breathing is critical in Thai Massage. The breath is a very useful aid in relaxing muscles. When putting clients into a yoga posture or another type of stretch, it is always more beneficial for them if they can breathe deeply into the abdomen rather than hold their breath (which will probably be their first reaction). Deep breathing relaxes the lower abdomen, the lower back, and the diaphragm, and greatly reduces tension throughout the entire body. Clinical studies have shown that yogic stretching may prevent inflammation, depression, asthma, and cardiovascular disease (see links and references to current research in the interactive forum at www.thai-institute.net).



Breathing is especially important during the more intensive full-body stretches.

Deep exhalation is also said to detoxify the energy system by releasing stagnant or negative energy from the body and drawing in fresh supplies with subsequent inhalations.

It is not always easy for clients to remember to breathe, especially in deeper stretches, so you will need to monitor your client closely throughout the massage and assist them. Begin by explaining the benefits of deep breathing, and then help them be aware of their breath throughout the massage.

Concentrate on the client's breathing during the massage, and set your pace by this rhythm. Deepen the stretch with the client's exhalation, and ease off a bit with each inhalation. The client establishes the pace; your job is to respond to this cadence. Soon, if you are paying attention, you will find yourself moving and breathing in harmony with your client's breathing. When you find yourself in this situation, locked into a dance of graceful

movement and breath with another individual, you will discover why this art form has been called a “moving meditation.”

Body Mechanics

One of the most dangerous habits that a Thai Massage practitioner can fall into is using improper body mechanics. In Thailand, I have seen tiny female Thai practitioners work on hulking Western bodybuilders with seemingly effortless grace. In my own practice, I have seen that the opposite — a client who is much smaller than the practitioner — is also a challenging situation. With proper body mechanics, therapists can give an effective massage to anyone, regardless of size or weight, without feeling drained or exhausted. With improper body mechanics, however, practitioners are in danger of injuring themselves and/or their client.

Back pain, repetitive strain injuries, joint pain, and other injuries common in massage therapists may be less problematic for Thai Massage practitioners if they use correct body mechanics. Important principles of body mechanics are discussed throughout Part 2 of this book, but let's recap them here briefly:

1. Always keep your back straight with an open chest and relaxed shoulders.
2. You can most effectively translate bodyweight through straight elbows, wrists, and fingers.
3. Your strength comes from your legs and hips, not your arms or back.
4. When you need increased leverage, bring your center of gravity (your waist) up over the client instead of reaching with your arms.

Understanding and using gravity, fulcrums, levers, and other principles of physics that are discussed throughout Part 2 of this book, allows the therapist

to deliver an effective massage while preserving his or her own well-being.

Timeframes

The classic Thai Massage routine lasts about an hour and a half. In most reputable massage clinics in Thailand, this is the minimum time for a massage, and a client can typically request a massage ranging up to 3 hours or more.

Westerners, accustomed to paying for massage in half-hour increments, will initially need some explanation. As soon as they receive their first Thai Massage, however, they will see that an hour and a half is in fact a good minimum, leaving the therapist enough leeway to cover the entire body effectively and for the client to experience true relaxation.

My students usually react to the news that they have to give an hour-and-a-half massage with trepidation, asking themselves, “How am I going to fill up all of this time?” They are soon pleasantly surprised by the fact that time seems to fly when giving a Thai Massage.

The following are some suggestions for creating Thai Massage routines of varying lengths:

Three-Hour Massage

For highly stressed or lethargic individuals, or for those requiring major therapy. In order to avoid fatigue, this length of massage should not be given by inexperienced practitioners. Perform all steps in Chapters 4 and 5, plus herbal compresses.

Two-Hour Massage

For stressed, fatigued, or ill clients. Follow all steps in Chapters 4 and 5. Or, perform a one-and-a-half-hour classic massage routine, and add herbal compresses afterward.

One-and-a-Half-Hour Massage

The “classic routine.” This length of time is a good guideline for a basic Thai Massage for most clients. Perform all steps in Chapter 4. Work in variations from Chapter 4 or 5, as time allows. A good rule of thumb is to spend 50 minutes on the front side of the body, have the client turn over, then work on the back side of the body for 30 minutes, finishing 10 minutes on the head and neck.

One-Hour Massage

A good length of time for a trial Thai Massage, so that client gets a feeling for this style of massage. Perform all steps in the classic routine in Chapter 4, skipping the steps introduced in the section Full-Body Stretches. Note Do not skip the *sen* work or joint mobilization and move right into the yoga stretches, as your clients will not be sufficiently warmed up and you may cause an injury.

Half-Hour Massage

Perfect length of time for a foot massage using Thai Massage techniques. Remember to press acupressure points at the hands and head in before finishing, in order to balance the energy throughout the body.

Recommended Frequency of Massage

Under normal circumstances, the average client who is looking for relaxation and invigoration should not get more than two massages a week, although daily massage is alright for short-term relief of acute physical conditions, or at particularly stressful times. Therapeutic massage clients should be seen according to the type of complaint. Acute injuries should be seen daily until the problem is relieved. Chronic cases should be seen on a weekly or — at maximum — a twice-weekly basis.

These guidelines are offered because there is such a thing as too much Thai Massage. Clients who are constantly stimulated by deep Thai work over a

long period of time can actually become depleted of energy, no matter how skilled the therapist.

Additional Important Factors

Learning Thai Massage can feel like rote memorization at first. But, the sequence as it is presented in this book is a tried-and-true system that has been perfected for generations. The moves are ordered in this way not because of someone's whim, but because the steps work together in a particular way. Often, a stretch is followed by a counter-stretch designed to release the muscles previously worked. There are also energetic reasons for the order of the movements, as the steps stimulate the major *sen* in a repetitive cyclical pattern. Once you are familiar with the *sen*, you can go back through the classic routine and analyze the line(s) activated by each step in order to discover the cyclical pattern. (There is a chart in Chapter 6 that lists these correlations.)

It is also important to learn the Thai Massage steps in the order they are presented here because they will help you develop a smooth sequence, provide a regular flow and rhythm, allow the client a more relaxing experience, and avoid redundancy. These steps flow from one to the next seamlessly, and as the practitioner becomes more familiar with the moves, he or she will find that they blend together into a routine (like a dance or a tai chi form) that is deeply satisfying to both practitioner and client. How are Thai Massage therapists able to work for eight hours straight giving one massage after another in Thailand's busy clinics? It is because their work itself is constantly regulating their own energy, moving energy through their bodies in a way that sitting at a desk never could!

Some clients will choose Thai Massage for the relaxation that it can bring. Others will prefer to be energized by the deep stretching and bodywork. Both types of clients will enjoy Thai Massage because it is a versatile art form. The

same massage can serve to relax or invigorate a client, depending on the speed, duration, and intensity of the routine. For an invigorating massage, the movements should be shorter, faster, with more rigorous pressing and quick, strong stretching movements. For a relaxing massage, the movements should be longer, slower, and gentler.

It is said that thought leads energy. Thus, the clear intention of the practitioner is responsible for determining the client's experience during a Thai Massage session. The practitioner's intention that the client receive soothing and relaxing vibrations directly creates that experience; similarly, the practitioner's intention that the client's energy and vitality increase is enough to manifest that reality. What is needed throughout is clear intention.

Part 2

The Classic Thai Massage Routine



Chapter 4

The Classic Thai Massage Routine



This chapter will walk you through the 108 steps of a classic Thai massage routine in detail. The routine in this chapter is specific to the Shivagakomarpaj Lineage (as taught by the late Ajahn Sintorn Chaichakan at the Old Medicine Hospital in Chiang Mai, Thailand), but is similar to the Thai Massage you would receive anywhere in Thailand or from any Thai practitioner.

The steps outlined in this chapter are arranged in a specific order, based on the principles of energy flow in the body. Another lineage of massage might present these steps in a different way. However, each school has its own reasons for ordering steps, and these decisions are not arbitrary. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that you follow the steps as they are presented in this book. Once you are familiar with the energetic principles behind this routine, you can experiment with replacing some steps with others, but this should only be done by the advanced practitioner.

AS STATED in the previous chapter, this classic Thai massage routine is designed to impart a balancing and invigorating experience for most of your clientele. Nevertheless, be sure to work within the capacity of the individual client, and honor his or her needs and limitations.

For reasons of simplicity and clarity, and because a female model representing the client appears in the photographs, the client is referred to throughout as *she* and her.

One last note: Be sure to completely read the previous chapters before diving in, as many additional points of safety and body mechanics, as well as terminology and theoretical concepts, are discussed earlier in this book. Also, remember that this text is not intended to replace instruction from a

qualified teacher. It's important to study these techniques with a teacher who can assist you in the learning process and ensure your and your client's safety. (See "Places to Study Thai Massage" in the appendix in the back of this book.)

1. Opening Prayer

Every traditional Thai Massage begins with a prayer to Jivaka, to request that he provide guidance for your massage. Ask for his healing energies or knowledge to come through your hands in order to help the client. This is a miniature version of the wai khru ceremony described in Chapter 1.

This moment of silence is also a chance for you to center yourself, to forget about the busy day you may have been having up to this point, and to align your intentions as best you can with the needs of your client. Be sure to take this moment to ground yourself before you touch the client and "plug in" to her energy system. Your massage will be that much more effective and beneficial for those you touch when you calm your mind, deepen your breathing, and cultivate *metta*. (See Chapter 1 for more details on the spirituality of Thai massage.)



Correlations with Yoga



Throughout this chapter, I will point out parallels between Thai massage and yoga therapy. This book is not intended to be an introduction to yoga postures, or *asanas*, and the reader should note that injury can result from attempting some of these positions without guidance. Furthermore, I should underscore that *hatha yoga* is not native to Thailand, which has its own self-stretching practice called *luesii dat ton*. I have included these correlations strictly as a point of comparison for those already familiar with the yoga tradition as a means to help understand the Thai steps.

The client's beginning position is known in yoga as *savasana*, or corpse pose. This pose is for relaxation and inward reflection. Place the client's arms on either side of her torso, palms facing upward. Spread her legs apart 30° to 45° , and allow her feet to fall open naturally. Her shoulders should be even, and should fall down against the mat. The client should breathe naturally, into the abdomen, and allow her back muscles to release toward the floor.

Feet and Leg Lines Series

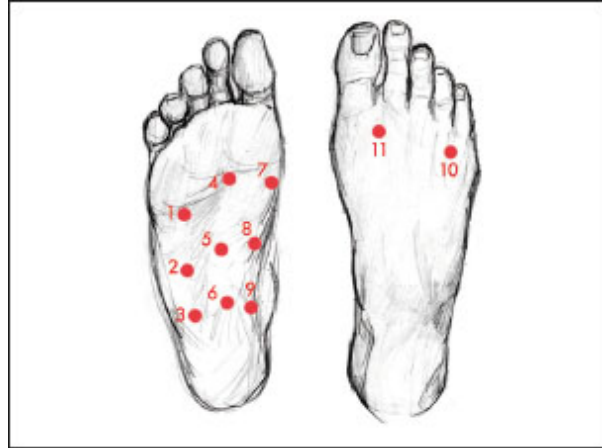
2. Walking Palm Press

Shivagakomarpaj Lineage Thai Massage starts at the lower part of the body and moves up, following the concept that energy purifies as it rises through the body. (See Chapter 3 for more details.) Our first contact with the client, therefore, is with the soles of the feet. In this step, keep your hands relaxed, like big cat paws, and evenly distribute your bodyweight through your hands. Keep your wrists directly under your shoulders, and your arms completely straight. Lean from side to side transferring your bodyweight with an open chest and relaxed shoulders. Your palms walk across the client's feet, from the toes to the heels. Repeat a couple of times.



3. Thumb Press the Feet

There are six important acupressure points on the sole of each foot (1-6), and three along the arch (7-9). Starting with the most laterally distant points on the outer side of the body, and moving from toe to heel, work your way across all nine points, pressing each one several times with firm thumb presses. You can do two feet at the same time if you wish, or one at a time if you find this easier. Then, turn the foot so that you can press the points on the top of the foot. Take the thumb and put it between the knuckles of the fourth and fifth toes. There is a point (10) that is rather sensitive, and which sends a little “zing” through the foot. The second point (11) is the exact same place between the knuckles of the big toe and the second toe.



Note that while the sole and arch can take quite a bit of pressure, you do not need a lot of strength on the points on the top of the feet, as they are very sensitive. If the client experiences pain with a thumb press, small thumb circles would work on these points just as well.

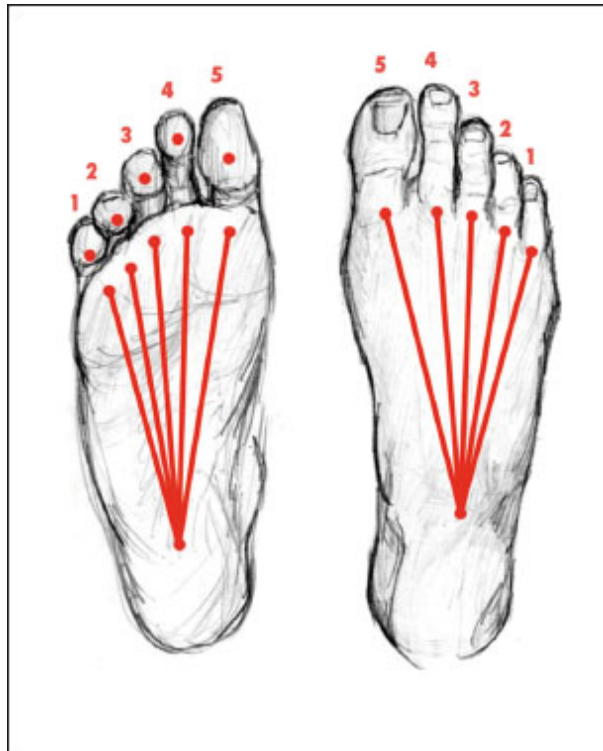


4. Thumb Press the Bottom of the Foot, and Thumb Circle the Top of the Foot

Taking the left foot for a female client, or the right foot for a male, thumb press the sole of the foot, starting at the base of the heel drawing a line from the heel to each toe. Perform this step on one toe at a time. Apply pressure to the points on the toes, as shown in the diagram. Pinch the tip of the toe between your index finger and thumb, then “pluck” the toe gently.



Next, for the top of the foot, start from the point right in front of the ankle (see red dot in diagram). From this point, follow the tendons (extensor digitorum) down to each toe with finger circles. Move down to the fifth toe first, stopping to thumb circle the knuckles. Repeat for each toe, moving from lateral to medial, from the pinky to the big toe.



5. Pull Each Toe to Crack Knuckles

In Thailand, the Thai Massage therapist is your chiropractor, and when you go for a Thai Massage, the therapist makes a point of cracking all of the knuckles on the toes and fingers (among other joints). It is your choice if you wish to do this as a Thai Massage therapist. Contrary to popular myth, cracking your knuckles does not enlarge them. The sound is just a part of the natural realignment of the bones. The gasses stuck between the bones release with a cracking sound as they are placed back into alignment.

Rotate each toe clockwise and counterclockwise three times in each direction to warm it up, and then, using a moderate amount of pressure, grip the toe, straighten your arms, and lean back to straighten it out. Use your bodyweight. There is no need to yank the toe hard, just give a little traction; it will crack if it needs realignment.

Optionally, you can combine this step with the second part of Step 4, thumb circling the top of the foot. As you complete your thumb circles for each toe, perform this step before continuing to the next toe.



Correlations with Yoga

The foot series on the following pages relates to a group of yogic exercises for the joints known collectively in Sanskrit as *Pawanmuktasana*.

THERAPEUTIC BENEFIT: These exercises are designed to improve the joints by encouraging movement and flexibility. They are used in particular to ward off or to treat arthritis, stiffness, and injury.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Caution is advised with clients who have pain in the feet or ankles, including arthritis, plantar fasciitis, or acute injury.

6. Stretching the Foot

First, support the heel with one hand and hook your other around the foot so your fingers touch the inner arch. In this position, you should be able to stretch the foot to the outside simply by leaning back, thus protecting the

joints in the leg from overstretching. Keep in mind that we are almost never using upper body muscle strength to do Thai massage, but as much as possible rely on bodyweight instead. Avoid “wringing out” the foot with your hands. With the correct hand position, you simply lean back, bringing your hands toward your chest, and the foot stretches without any effort on your part. When you switch the position of your hands as shown in the bottom left photo, the foot stretches to the inside.



7. Ankle Rotation

The ankle rotation is shown in the photo on the right. This again is not your arm muscles doing the work but your bodyweight. Support the heel and leg with your inside hand, then grip across the top of the toes with your outside hand. Circle three times in each direction—both clockwise and counter-clockwise.



Repeat Steps 3-7 for the other foot





8. Stretching the Feet and Ankles

For the first stretch, place your hands on the top of the client's feet, aligning her ankles with her legs. Apply your bodyweight to bring the soles of her feet toward the floor. Do this three times.

The second stretch brings the client's toes up toward her body, stretching out the sole of her foot. Be sure to properly align the foot so that the inner and outer arches are stretched evenly. Remember, this is a stretch for the feet and toes. The idea is not to get under the toes and stretch the hamstrings, but to get over the toes and concentrate on the sole of the foot. Push the client's toes back and then down, toward the mat.

For the last of these three stretches, bring both the client's feet to the inside. Press down, with straight arms so that your bodyweight comes down on the tops of her feet, bringing the inner arches toward the mat.

Remember, different clients have different levels of flexibility; therefore, how far you push or how much bodyweight you use in these moves will vary.



9. Palm Pressing Both Legs

At first, this looks like a repeat of Step 2, as you begin by palm pressing from the client's toes up the feet to the ankles. Be sure to do this with walking palm presses, leaning from side to side with your shoulders over your hands for the best use of body mechanics. This time instead of going back down the feet, continue up to the knees, palm pressing the soft part of the calf without pressing directly on the shin bone. When you reach the knees, put your palms right over them, and gently rotate the kneecaps (shown in the second photo). Never apply bodyweight directly to the knees. Rotate them clockwise and counterclockwise, four to five times in each direction.

Continue with your walking palm presses up the front of the client's legs until you reach the tops of the quadriceps muscles. For the upper legs, notice

in the third photo that the practitioner has lifted himself up onto his knees to bring his bodyweight over the client, while keeping his shoulders directly over his hands. This is to keep a natural curve in his back and to let gravity do the work.

Stop at the pelvis, and then proceed back down the leg with walking palm presses. Stop again for palm circles at the knees, and then palm press back down the lower legs, through the ankles, and down to the toes.

IMPORTANT: Note that for these palm presses, when you are leaning from side to side you should be slightly rolling the client's legs to the outside. This is a natural movement because of the way your bodyweight comes down, and not done deliberately. On the thighs, it is also important to maintain “cat paws”—widespread fingers and palms—in order to provide a large area for the distribution of your bodyweight. If you apply pressure straight down with the heel of your palm, it can be painful. So, always be sure to gently and evenly roll the muscle to the outside as you walk up the legs. Again, this will happen naturally when your bodyweight is shifted from side to side.



10. Stretch Inside of Leg

The next three steps will be a series that will appear again and again each time you work on the Thai *sen* in a section of the body. For each of the four limbs and the back, you will always first stretch, then palm press, then thumb press, then palm press, then stretch. I call this “the A-B-C-B-A pattern.”

Begin with the right leg for men, or left leg for women. For the first step, move her leg out to the side, exposing the medial side, so that you can position yourself with your arms straight out in front of you and access the client's inner leg. Give yourself enough room to work comfortably. Place one hand on her inner thigh, and one on her inner foot. Shifting your bodyweight forward, give her leg a gentle stretch to align it. Imagine you are spreading out the inner leg *sen* before you.



11. Palm Press Inside of Leg

Apply walking palm presses to the inside of the leg, as always beginning from just above the ankle, moving up across the inner thigh, and then back down to the ankle again. Cover the entire inner thigh area with wide “cat paws.” Skip over the knee to avoid pressing on the bone. Always keep your work in front of you, moving your body position up the leg as needed, so that your torso is never twisted.



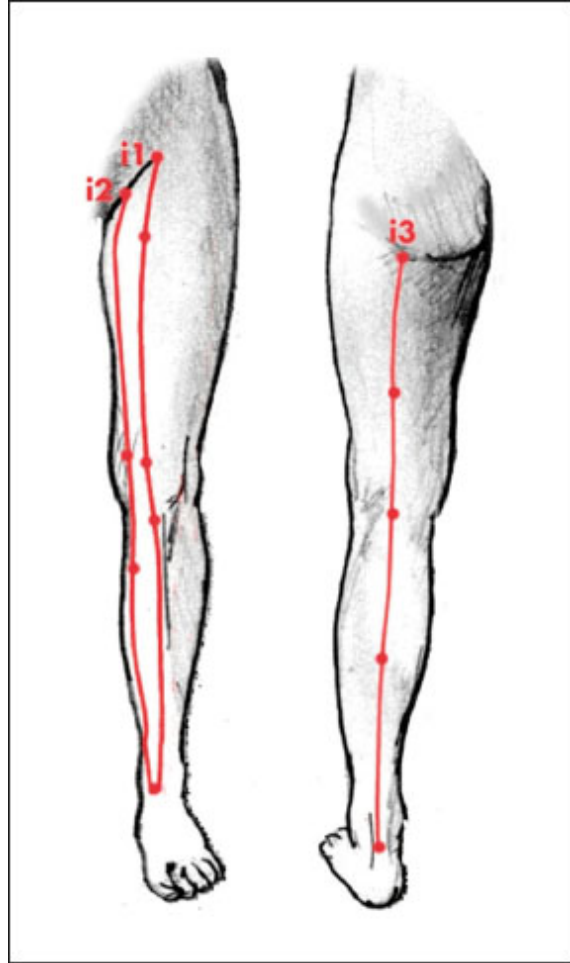
12. Thumb Press Inside *Sen* of the Leg

Following the guidelines in Chapter 3, apply thumb presses along the inner leg *sen* **i1**, **i2** and **i3**. If from this position it is not advantageous to work on the line **i3**, you can leave this out for now. Remember, work these *sen* from the ankle to the upper thigh and back down to the ankle.



Finish by Repeating Palm Press (Step 11) and Stretch (Step 10) to Complete the A-B-C-B-A Pattern.





13. Stretch Outside of Same Leg

Having worked on the inner leg, move your stance to the outside of the client's same leg to work the outer side. Repeat the A-B-C-B-A pattern. Begin again with a stretch. Move her leg in line with her shoulder. Place one of your hands just under her hipbones in the soft part of the thigh, and your other hand on the top of her foot. Placing your hands in butterfly position, apply your bodyweight evenly into both your hands by leaning forward. Be sure that you are pressing the foot in toward the midline of the body to give a stretch across the outside of her leg.



14. Palm Press Outside of Leg

Palm Press, starting from the ankle, moving up toward the hip, and then back down to the ankle. Be sure not to press on bone, and to skip over the knee. Remember to always keep your work in front of you, moving your body position up the leg as needed so that your torso is never twisted. If the client's leg flops around during this step, stabilize her foot with your knee or foot.



15. Thumb Press Outside *Sen* of the Leg

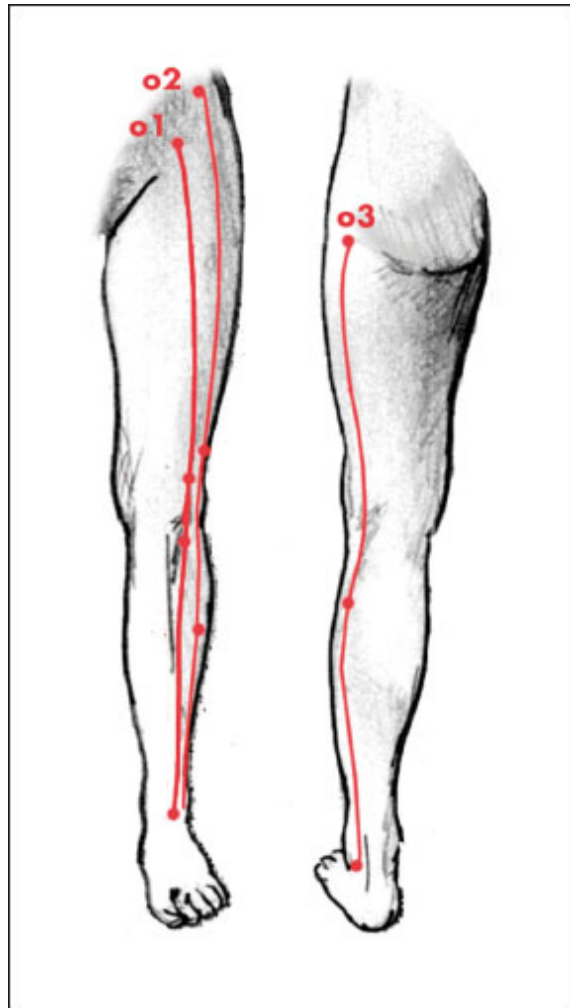
Following the guidelines in Chapter 3, apply thumb presses to outer leg *sen* **o1**, **o2**, and **o3**. Start at the ankle, proceed up the leg to the hip, and then back down again.



Finish by Repeating Palm Press & Stretch to Complete the A-B-C-B-A Pattern.



Repeat Steps 10-15 for Other Leg



VARIATION: **Alternate Position for Leg Lines**

When you are more familiar with the sen in the legs, you can use this alternate position to thumb press two at a time. Or, you can use this step in addition to Steps **10-15** in order to give the leg sen extra stimulation.

Below the knee, press **o1** first, then **o2** and **i1** together, then **o3** and **i2** together, and finally **i3**. For each set of lines, start at the ankle, and work up to the knee, and then back down again. When you are working **i3**, use your knees to keep her foot on the ground as show in the photo on the left. Above the knee, adjust your hands as shown in the photo on the right. Press **i1** and **o1** together, then **i2** and **o2**, then with ordinary thumb presses, work **o3** and finally **i3**.

This alternate method will make your sen routine for the legs quite a bit quicker; however, it should not be attempted until you are thoroughly familiar with the exact position of each line.



16. Finish the Legs with a Palm Press and “Opening the Wind Gate”

Step 16 is initially the same as Step 9. The palm press is both the warm-up and cool-down for the leg lines. Palm Press the client’s legs up to the knees, and palm circle the knees as before. Then, adjust your weight so that your center of gravity is over the client, your arms remaining perpendicular to the ground, and continue the palm presses up the quadriceps.

When your palms arrive at the top of the quads, place your hands directly over the spot on the leg where you feel the femoral pulse. This point is found along line **i2**, slightly below the groin, and to the inside of the femur (see photo on next page). With your hands in “butterfly” position, fingers spread out away from each other, apply your bodyweight to this point.



Applying bodyweight to this point, the blood supply to the legs is lessened dramatically and the legs may begin to tingle. Hold this stop for 30 seconds, and then release. This move is called “opening the wind gate,” or in Thai *phud pathu lom*. Thai Massage therapists use this technique to flush the energy system of the legs.

As the energy rushes back into the legs, palm press the legs back down to the toes, bringing fresh energy to the farthest extremity. The client should feel a rush of warmth through her legs.

Be sure not to perform this or any manipulation of the “wind gates” on clients with circulatory or cardiac disorders, including, but not limited to hypertension, varicose veins, and heart disease.



VARIATION: Opening the Wind Gate in the Legs



This is an option that you may wish to perform in clients who enjoy deeper work.

In this step, a finger press is used on the wind gate instead of the palm press. This can be a sensitive area, so beware of applying too much pressure.

While you are here, you can also use the bladed hands in this position to press along the iliopsoas muscle in order to encourage it to relax.

Be sure to use discretion any time you employ this type of deep pressure.

Repeat on both sides.

Leg Stretch Series

17. Figure 4 Walking Palm Press

Start with the left leg for women or the right leg for men. Place the client's foot by her opposite knee to make a "Figure 4." Put your hands in butterfly position, with your fingers facing away from each other, and deliver a walking palm press to her bent leg. As always, keep your bodyweight above the client. The palms should press on the soft parts of the legs, inner thigh, and calf muscle, not on the shin or knee bones. Walk from the hip to the knee with one hand, while walking ankle to knee with the other. Then, walk your hands back to the starting location. Use only a little bodyweight at first, but gradually increase with each press until you reach your maximum. The more bodyweight you apply, the deeper the stretch is for the hip.

For those clients with less flexibility in their hips, use a padded bolster or your own thigh to support their leg as you apply the palm presses. This added support will lessen the intensity of the stretch and minimize the risk for injury.



18. Figure Four Hip Stretch

This is the first of the series of joint mobilizations. From this step forward, proper breathing becomes essential for the client. One of the key physiological and energetic points to keep in mind is that the speed, rhythm, and deepness of the breath will regulate the relaxation of the muscles and the body. If your client is holding her breath or clenching her diaphragm, she cannot relax the rest of the body, and will not be able to enjoy the full benefit of these stretches. (See Chapter 3 for more information on the importance of breathing in Thai Massage.)

Press with butterfly palm presses on both of the client's thighs at the same time. Keep her hips squared and on the mat, and bring her bent knee down toward the floor by palm pressing from the hips down toward both knees at the same time.

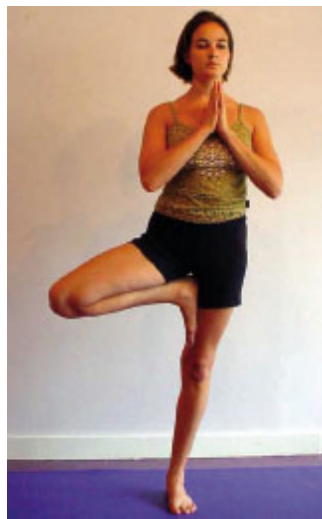
On clients who are less flexible, the bent leg may not come all the way to the mat. Remember that it is more important to keep the hips square and on the mat than to get the bent knee down to the floor. Use a cushion or prop (such as your own leg) under the bent knee, if necessary, to keep the hips in the correct position.

If you have a very flexible client, you can place her foot on top of her thigh in the half-lotus position to give an extra stretch. If you decide to use this position, to protect her knee, keep her foot and ankle engaged.





Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Vrksasana* ENGLISH: Tree Pose

POINTS: Engage standing leg with hip over ankle; place bent leg foot as high up on leg as possible; hip bones spread; navel stays forward; take bent leg knee out to side

BENEFITS: Stretches groin, hips, chest and shoulders; strengthens legs, abdominals, calves, knees, ankles, arches of feet; relieves sciatica; improves balance

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Headache, low blood pressure

19. “Paddleboat” on Line i3

Take hold of the client’s straight leg with your hand, and use your outside foot to bring the client’s bent leg into a 90° angle. For this step, you may have to adjust your position from that which is shown in the photo, depending on

how long your legs are and how long your client's legs are. Don't worry about where your hands hold her legs. The important thing to remember is keeping her bent leg at a 90° angle with your feet. This will expose the belly of her hamstrings to ensure the presses you deliver are located directly on **i3**. Once you are stable in this position, apply a little bit of pressure to her bent leg's hamstrings with the foot of your inside leg.

Be careful to use proper body mechanics. Don't use your upper body muscles to pull the client's legs. Simply anchor yourself by holding the ankles, and lean back. Roll your shoulders back to open your chest. The foot press is achieved simply by straightening your bent inside leg, as if you were in a paddleboat. Bending and straighten your leg to apply foot presses, walk along the back of her thigh.

If you are comfortable pressing with one foot, try walking with both of your feet. Walk along her hamstrings from the knee up toward the groin, and then back down. Do this a couple times.

Be sure to apply your foot presses carefully on her thigh. Think of the foot press like the palm press, where you stretch out your fingers to achieve an even distribution of bodyweight over a wider area. Be sure to flatten out the sole of your foot, so that the pressure is evenly distributed.

If you have a client who enjoys deeper pressure, you can also do heel presses in this same location once you have warmed up the hamstring, as explained above. After finishing the heel press, you can cool things down by walking up and down the back of the leg with more foot presses.

When doing this step with less flexible clients, take care not to hurt them. If they cannot bend the hip to a 90° angle, skip this move. There are other ways of accessing line **i3** that we will be looking at shortly.



20. Finger Press on Line o1

Stop walking along **i3** in the middle of the hamstrings. Release the client's straight leg, take hold of the bent leg with both hands, and fold the bent leg across the tops of your feet, so that the client's shin is against your shin.

As shown in the photo, your shins keep the client in the Figure 4 position, while your feet apply pressure into her hamstrings.

Bring your hands around and reach for line **o1**, hook your fingers in, and lean back, using your bodyweight to apply a finger press. Release and repeat, following line **o1** from the knee to the thigh.

This stretch may not be possible for everyone. If you yourself are not flexible enough to do this step as shown, try using only one of your feet.



21. Thai Fist on Lines i1 and i2

Finish this section with the Thai fist, patting along lines **i1** and **i2** along the bent leg to relax the muscles before moving on. Work from the knee to the hip and back.



22. Leg Traction

From the same position you have been in for the last two steps, take a hold of the client's leg and bring it up to a 90° angle, as in the photo, with her shin parallel to the mat and her thigh perpendicular to the ground. Bend your inner knee so that it's out of the way, and place your outer leg so that it is straight, with your heel flat against the ground and the sole of your foot flat against your client's hamstring.

IMPORTANT: If you use a bent leg for this step you will be unstable, and if your leg slips while pulling back, you could injure your client.

First, push her knee away from you toward her shoulder. Your entire foot should be flat and fully contacting the hamstring insertions. Next, hold the client's foot with the hand position from Step 6, and lean back as shown in the second photo. As her leg straightens out, the ball of your foot hooks onto her pelvic bone. As her leg is pulled, you create traction on the hip, knee, and ankle.



With your hands positioned as in Step , stretch the foot to the outside, then change your hand position and stretch it again to the inside. Repeat two or three times each. Be gentle, and don't be surprised if you get a "pop" from the hip or other joints with some clients.

To release this position, bring the client's leg back to the 90° position in which you started. If you'd like to repeat this step, be sure to always move the client's knee forward to the shoulder prior to leaning back, as described above.



23. Shake Leg to Relax

Shake the client's leg gently to relax the hip. Scoop your hand under the knee, lift up to bend the knee, and shake the leg. Support the leg with a bent knee to minimize any potential for hyperextension of the knee joint. Do this several times from the bent knee stance, as you position yourself for the next step.



24. Hip Rotation

Bend the client's knee to a 90° angle, her shin parallel to the ground. Bring yourself in close to the client, bending your outer knee, with the sole of your foot flat on the mat, and resting your inner knee on the mat. (In this and future steps, this will be called the “bent knee stance.”) With the proper stance, all you do to rotate your client's hip is lunge forward and back while holding the bent leg at the 90° position. Use your arms to guide the hip around in a gentle circle. Rotate the hip through its entire range of motion, five times clockwise and five times counterclockwise in circles of increasing size without lifting your client's hips off the mat.

This is a difficult step for many clients, who are hesitant to give up control of their hips. If your client is clenching her muscles when you are trying to do this step, shake the leg gently, encourage her to relax, and try it again. Just a little gentle shake is usually all it takes to get a client to relax. Have the client breathe deeply into her abdomen and learn to enjoy the greater range of mobility and flexibility that comes from giving up control for a little while.



IMPORTANT: For all of the upcoming steps, be sure not to use upper body strength. Use only your bodyweight, and keep your back straight. Transfer bodyweight through your straight arms to achieve the desired motion.

25. Hip Flexion & Quad Stretch

Bring the client's leg back to the 90° starting point you used for the previous step. This time put your outer palm just outside her shin, and put your inner palm on the top of her foot. (Remember, you should never apply pressure to the knee itself, and never apply pressure on bone.)

Leaning your bodyweight forward, keep your back straight, chest open, shoulders relaxed, and arms straight. Now, lunge forward, slowly bringing the client's knee toward her shoulder on the same side of the body. This position will stretch her shin all the way down to the ankle. By pressing it down toward the mat, you can also stretch the top of her foot. As pictured, this is also a great stretch for the quadriceps.

You may have to encourage your client to breathe in order to help her relax. If she is holding her breath, this will lock up the abdomen, and this will prevent her muscles from stretching as deeply as they could.

IMPORTANT: If the client cannot reach as far as shown, simply take her to where she can go and encourage her to relax. As with all of the steps discussed in this book, it is more important to keep the client's hips square and back straight than to achieve the full stretch shown in the photo. The photos in this book illustrate the ideal for these positions. Not every client will be able to do the full stretch, but you should always keep in mind the picture of the ideal and be working toward it.

If you suspect that there may be some history of knee injury, do not do this step. A modification to protect the knees is to put the flat portion of your forearm behind her bent knee to decrease its compression as it bends. All the other principles of alignment and body mechanics apply.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Pavana Muktasana*
ENGLISH: Wind-Relieving Pose

POINTS: Long spine, forehead towards floor; sit-bones towards heels

BENEFITS: Stretches muscles of lower back and spine; improves digestion & elimination

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Pregnancy, abdominal pain, hernia, severe depression

VARIATION: **Pigeon Pose**



This posture is slightly different, and you can either use it in addition to, or instead of, Step 25. This time, the knee is brought not toward the shoulder but toward the outside at 45°, and the foot is brought toward the navel. One hand should be on the outer shin and one on the top of the foot. Care should be taken in positioning the ankle for this move. Be sure that the ankle is straight, and that the stretch is applied evenly across the top of the foot.

Apply your bodyweight down through both your hands, being careful, as in Step 25, not to overstretch the client's knee. (You can insert your forearm into the bent knee in this step as well.) This time, the client should feel this stretch more in the hip and groin. The step can be further adjusted to concentrate on the iliopsoas or hip flexor by bringing the knee in toward the midline of the body.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Eka Pada Rajakapotasana* Preparation

ENGLISH: One-Legged King Pigeon Preparation

POINTS: Long spine; foot engaged; straight back

BENEFITS: Stretches quadriceps, inner thighs, groins, hip flexors, abdomen, chest and neck

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Lower back pain, knee pain, ankle pain

26. Hamstring Stretch

This stretch focuses on the hamstrings, not on the back of the knee. The idea is not to straighten the client's knee completely (as shown in the yoga pose on the next page), but to bring the knee as close as possible to the shoulder to stretch the hamstrings.

Staying in the bent-leg stance, move to the midline of your client. Draw your outside leg in close to your client's body to provide support for her leg. This also helps achieve better alignment of her body during the stretch.

Place the sole of her foot on your shoulder. The arch of her foot will fit perfectly into the contour between your deltoid and pectoral muscles. Use your outside hand to stabilize the foot and your inside hand to brace her straight leg on the mat. Always keep the fingers of this hand pointing toward her feet with your palm flat on her leg. As you lean into the stretch, your wrist will open. Also remember to use your bodyweight, and not your upper body strength, to work on the client. Keep your chest open, roll your shoulders back, and keep your back straight as you lean into the stretch.

There are many different ways to do this step to maximize your body mechanics, depending on your height, the length of the client's leg, and her level of flexibility. The exact spot where you should position yourself relative to her leg will become second nature with experience. It will likely be different for each client.

However you do this step, maximize your use of bodyweight by bending into your forward knee. The idea is for your client to relax in this move, so if you see her tensing up, encourage her to keep breathing deeply, which will relax the hamstrings.



The photo below shows a common mistake when performing Step 26. Therapists must keep an eye on the straight leg as well as the leg that is stretching. The straight leg should not be allowed to rise like the client's is in this photo. This throws off the alignment of the hips, potentially placing stress on the lower back. In the photo on the previous page, this problem is avoided by applying your bodyweight through one hand on the client's passive leg. Apply weight evenly through both your arms and hands to keep her straight leg flat against the ground while her stretching leg moves towards the shoulder. This keeps the pelvis and the hips in correct alignment, thus protecting the lower back.



Incorrect Alignment



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Supta Padangushtasana* Variation

ENGLISH: Reclining Hand to Foot Pose Variation

POINTS: Sacrum remains level to floor; engage quadriceps muscles

BENEFITS: Stretches hips, quadriceps, hamstrings, groins, calves; strengthens knees; relieves mild backache, sciatica, and menstrual discomfort

CONTRAINDICATIONS: High blood pressure (raise upper body on blanket), headache, diarrhea

27. Hip Stretch (Lateral Rotation)

Step out your forward foot, opening your hip at 45° and bending the client's leg so that the knee drops toward the mat. Place her foot into the bend that is made with your hip, right over the front pocket of your pants. Allow her hip to relax to the outside while you support her outside knee with your outside hand, cupping under the knee.

Supporting her leg with your outside hand, transition your bodyweight forward by lunging into your bent leg, while guiding her knee toward her armpit. Ask your client to breathe into the stretch to help relax the muscles. As with the previous step, stabilize her straight leg and keep it from rising by applying pressure with your inside hand. Keeping your inside hand on her straight leg and your fingers pointing toward her toes will allow for the correct alignment of her pelvis and hips and deepen the stretch.



Incorrect Alignment



Correct Alignment



Correlations with yoga



SANSKRIT: *Virabhadrasana II* Variation

ENGLISH: Variation on Warrior II

POINTS: Knee directly over ankle; tailbone tucked in; sternum lifted

BENEFITS: Stretches muscles of the ankle; strengthens back, leg, foot and

abdominal muscles; relieves mild backache, sciatica, and menstrual discomfort; improves balance; increases stamina; prevents osteoporosis

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Heart problems, high blood pressure (modify with hands on hips)

28. Lying Spinal Twist

Take the client's foot and place it across her opposite leg, either above or below the knee. Next, slowly apply pressure to bring this knee down toward the mat away from you. Her sacrum should rotate perpendicular to the mat.



Place your opposite hand on the client's shoulder to keep it down and aligned. This will create a stretch that crosses the body. Both of your arms should be straight, so that you can easily transfer your bodyweight. Hold the client in position for five breaths.



The purpose of your hand on the shoulder is to keep her shoulders square. The focus of this stretch is the lower back, so you don't want to let the client's shoulders come off the ground. Keeping your hand firmly on her upper body prevents any lift, but be sure to press only on the deltoid muscles, so as not to dig into any sensitive areas. You can use your foot if you would like two hands to assist in bringing her knee down, or if you want to massage her back with your fingers, thumb, palm, or an herbal compress. Turn your client's hand over, palm facing down. Place your foot over her bicep. (This ensures you aren't applying pressure to her inner arm.)





Now, you have two hands free to allow you to do other things. This option also works well to increase the bodyweight you are applying to the client's leg, resulting in a deeper stretch.

A third option can be used to position your body for improved leverage. With your client's foot flat on the mat, place your foot right alongside hers. This will keep her foot from sliding down, thus achieving a better stretch. Place your hand firmly on her deltoid muscle and bring her knee toward the ground.





Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Shava Udarakarshanasana*

ENGLISH: Spinal Twist (Lying)

POINTS: Take knee to floor only if sacrum remains comfortable, taking care not to overstretch; both shoulder blades on floor

BENEFITS: Stretches and strengthens muscles of spine; stretches sacroiliac joints; relieves mild backache

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Severe back pain, spinal injury



29. Quadriceps Stretch (Medial Rotation of Hip)

Supporting her leg in one hand and her hips in the other, gently roll the client's body back down, so that her back is again on the mat as shown in the photos. Be sure that her heel remains close against the gluteal muscles during this transition.



Once you have rolled your client's back onto the mat, palm press her quads in order to enhance the stretch. Work on bringing her knee closer to the mat, but be mindful to ensure there is no undue stress to the hip, knee, or ankle. Continue to keep the foot tucked as close to the body as possible.



Incorrect Alignment

If the client's back begins to arch, insert a cushion or a prop such as your leg under her bent knee. This will protect and support her back and avoid injury. To remove her from this position, tuck your hand onto her sacrum. Stabilize her bent leg into her gluteal muscles with your other hand. Roll her back onto her side while maintaining her tucked leg against her body.

Once she is fully rotated onto her side, and only then, remove her leg from the tucked position. This will ensure you have protected all her joints from potential injury.



Correct Alignment

Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Supta Virasana*

ENGLISH: Reclining Hero's Pose

POINTS: Bent knee at midline; bent-knee heel brushing side of hip

BENEFITS: Stretches abdomen, quadriceps, knees, hip flexors, lower back and waist; reduces menstrual discomfort; aids in digestion; relieves asthma;

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Knee pain, ankle pain, lower back pain, high blood pressure

VARIATION: **Finger Press Iliopsoas**



This is an optional move you may wish to consider with your clients who enjoy more pressure and deeper work.

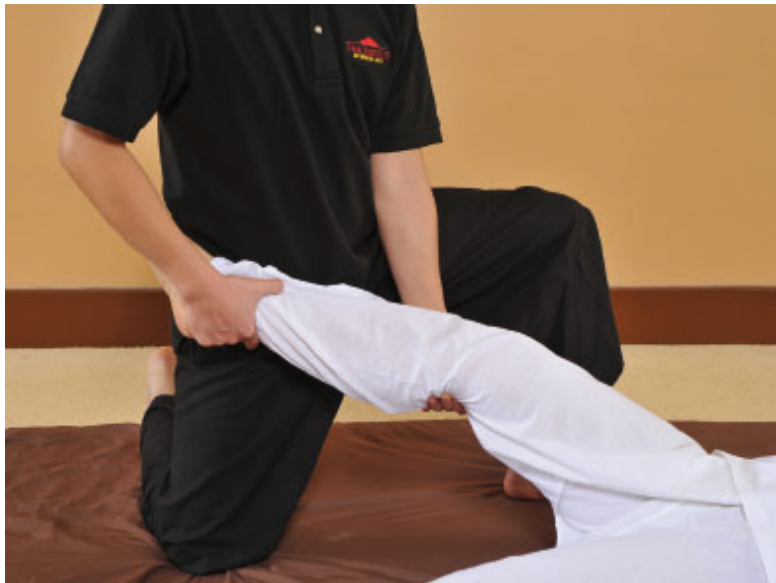
In Step **29**, the iliopsoas muscle is exposed and engaged. It is easily accessible by using a bladed hand to finger press just inside the pelvic girdle.

Press down gently in synchronization with the client's breathing. As the client breathes in, release the press to allow her to take a full breath. As she exhales, press down deeply into the muscle.

Be sure to press on the iliopsoas muscle, and not on the colon or the hip bone. You can find the iliopsoas by following the curve of the pelvis along the inside of the pelvic girdle.

30. Shake Leg to relax

Same as step 23.



31. rotate Hip

Hold the client's leg in your hands. Take a standing position 45° across the corner of your mat. Now, rotate her hip clockwise and counterclockwise by rotating the foot around in larger and larger circles. It's important not to use your upper body strength or your back muscles to support her leg. Instead, bend at your legs and move from your waist. This will allow you to keep your back straight, chest open, and shoulders back.



32. Hamstring and Calf Stretch

Straighten out the client's leg and bring it up to 90°. Place her leg along the outside of your upper torso and in front of your shoulder. Bring your outside foot close to your client's body to maintain stability throughout the stretch. Reach up with your outside hand to engage the active foot, helping to enhance the stretch of the calf and hamstrings. As usual, stabilize the nonactive leg with your inside hand, fingers pointing toward the toes. Lean forward into your bent knee with a straight back, an open chest, and shoulders back. Bring her knee toward her shoulder, keeping her hip, knee, and shoulder aligned.

If your upper back starts to become rounded due to the client's flexibility, place your outside palm behind her heel and straighten your arm. Continue to stabilize the non-active leg with your inside hand. From this position, you are able to continue to bring her leg forward, toward the mat by her head.

The optimal pose would place the foot just above her shoulder and next to her ear, although this is possible with only a very small minority of clients.



IMPORTANT: In this step, the client will need to breathe deeply as the stretch increases to help relax the muscles and deepen the pose.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Supta Padangushtasana* Variation

ENGLISH: Reclining Hand to Foot Pose Variation

POINTS: Sacrum remains level to floor; engage quadriceps muscles

BENEFITS: Stretches hips, quadriceps, hamstrings, groins, calves; strengthens knees; relieves mild backache, sciatica, and menstrual

discomfort

CONTRAINDICATIONS: High blood pressure (raise upper body on blanket), headache, diarrhea

VARIATIONS: For Clients With Less Flexibility

For the least flexible client, simply kneel in front of your client's feet. Place her leg on your knee. Cup the heel protecting the Achilles tendon. Raise the leg until you feel the tightening of her hamstrings. If the client can stretch more than 40°, try the next option.



In the second option, you should cup the client's heel and place your forearm against the sole of her foot. To stabilize her leg, place your other hand on her thigh or hip. This helps to enhance the stretch while keeping the pelvis in alignment.



As you lean forward, your forearm stretches her foot toward her head, engaging the calf and hamstring. Be careful not to hyperextend her knee in this position by applying too much bodyweight to her upper thigh.

In the final variation for this step, the client's leg is brought to 90°, but taken no farther. From this position, you can press down on the toes in order to activate the hamstrings and calf muscles. Your inside foot presses down on the client's inactive thigh, squaring the hips and keeping the back solidly on the mat.



33. Triangle (Abduction of Hip)

First, bring the client's leg back down to the mat. Next, slowly draw the leg out to the side, gently testing how far it can go. You know you have reached the optimal point when you notice the opposite foot start to inch toward the midline. When you reach this point, hold the legs steady and plant your feet as shown in the photo in order to keep both her legs straight.



Apply palm presses to the inside of the active thigh on line **i2** along the groin muscle. Cover the entire area of the inner thigh, from the knee to the hip and back. Be gentle as you proceed, because as you press directly on the activated groin muscle you will find that some of these points can be quite sensitive. Massaging below the knee risks over-rotation of the hip and could result in injury.

As in other steps, the client's opposite hip may start to lift off the mat, causing potential back strain. If this is the case, you can apply pressure to the upper thigh on the opposite side with your inside hand to keep the hips square and the thigh on the ground.





Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Utthita Trikonasana*

ENGLISH: Extended Triangle Pose

POINTS: Back toes angle to front of mat 10°; engage both quadriceps; spread hip bones; lengthen both sides of rib cage; head directly over front foot

BENEFITS: Stretches muscles of the legs, knees, ankles, shoulders, chest, spine; strengthens thighs, knees, ankles; relieves mild backache, sciatica; prevents osteoporosis

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Heart trouble, high or low blood pressure, headache, diarrhea, serious back injury, neck problems (don't turn head)

34. Cross-Stretch (Adduction of Hips)

Stand up, walk the client's leg up to 90°, and bring it down on the opposite side across her body. (Be sure when you do this to walk around her body, not over it. Walking over your client's body in Thai culture is considered disrespectful. It's also unsafe as you could trip over your client's body, something to be avoided at all costs.) While circling your client's body, take the opportunity to straighten the nonactive leg bringing it in line with her shoulder on the same side.

Next, plant your inner knee right next to the thigh of her nonactive leg to keep it in place. Hook her active leg onto your shin, so that you can keep it in place with no physical effort on your part. The ideal is to take her foot to her outstretched hand.



Holding this stretch, you palm press the active leg as shown in photo on the left. The palm presses are in the direction of the stretch, along line **o3**, covering the outside leg from the knee to the hip and back.

Next, for an extra stretch, hook your fingers into line **il** and pull towards you as shown in the photo on the right.

Start these finger presses above the knee, move all the way up to the hip flexor (iliopsoas), and then work your way back down.





Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Parivrtta Trikonasana*

ENGLISH: Revolved Triangle Pose

POINTS: Back toes angle towards front of mat 45°; engage both quadriceps; take front leg hip back to square with back leg hip; level sacrum; lengthen spine; shoulder blades towards spine

BENEFITS: Stretches muscles of the legs, hips, spine, and chest; relieves mild backache; improves balance

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Spinal injury, severe back pain, low blood pressure, headache, diarrhea

35. Shake Leg to relax It

Release the previous stretch gently, and walk the leg back to 90°. Make sure the pelvis and back are straight and aligned, then shake the leg as in Step 23. Set the leg down.



repeat Steps 17-35 for other leg.

Finish leg routine by palm pressing both legs. (See Step 9.)

Hands and Arms Series

36. Thumb Press Hand Points

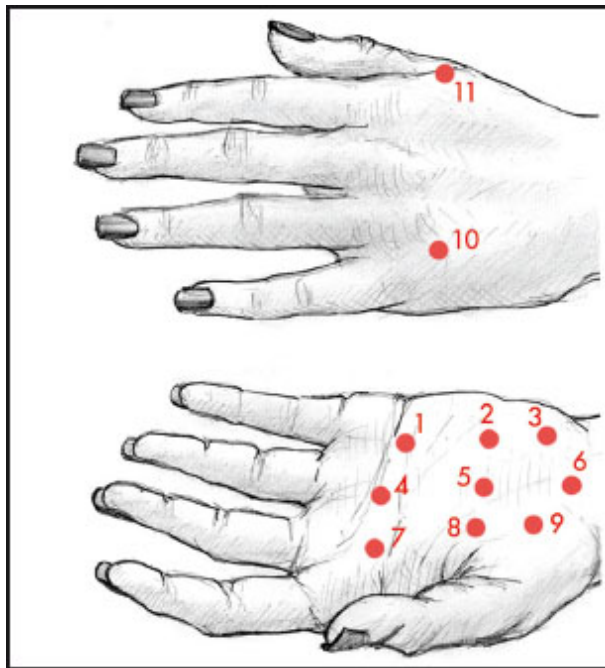
Walk around to the client's side. Start with the left hand for a female, or the right hand for a male. Isolate the client's middle finger using the last two fingers of each of your hands, as shown in the photo. Place the client's hand flat on the mat. Position yourself in correct posture, placing your bodyweight over her hand, keeping your arms straight. While simultaneously drawing her hand open by pulling up with your fingertips, apply thumb presses to her palm.



There are nine points on the palm that roughly correlate with the nine points on the sole of the foot. Press them one or two at a time. The top-level points are right under the knuckles. The middle level points are in the middle of the palm. The bottom points are at the base of the hand.

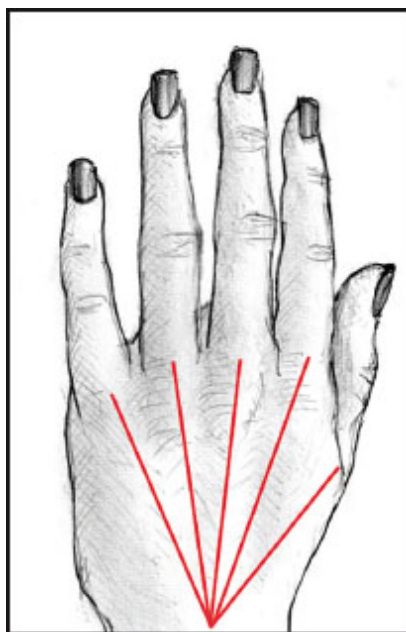
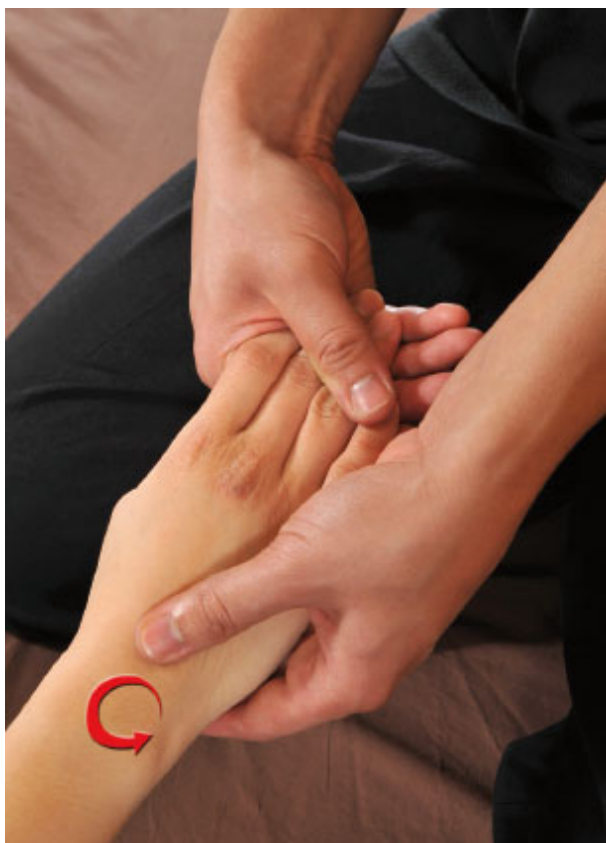


Next, roll the hand over, rotating the elbow and shoulder in unison. Very gently thumb press or thumb circle the two points on the top of the hand. These two points are sensitive acupressure points. The point by the thumb is located between the thumb and forefinger, in the webbing in-between where the bones of the two fingers meet. The second point is just below and in-between the knuckles of the fourth and fifth fingers.



37. Thumb Circle Back of Hand

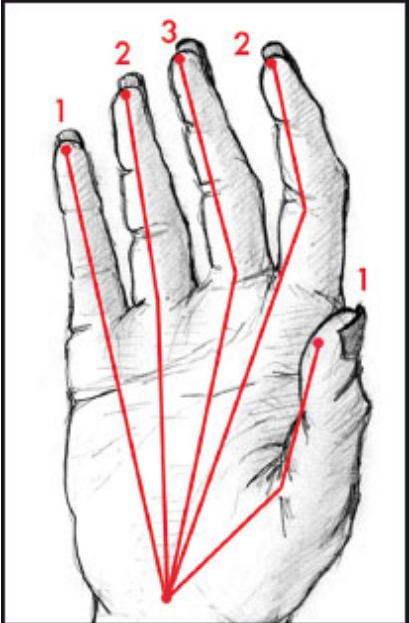
Now, thumb circle the top of the hand from the center of the wrist out to each finger individually. Start with the fifth finger, working toward the thumb.



38. Stretch Palm and Fingers

Stretch the client's palm by running your thumbs from the base of the hand out to the ends of the pinky and the thumb at the same time. Start back at the

base of the palm, and this time run your thumbs up to the index finger and ring finger at the same time. Lastly, start at the base of the palm and go up the middle of the hand to the tip of the middle finger.





39. Pull Each Finger and Crack Knuckles

Start with thumb circles on each knuckle to warm it up. Take each individual finger and rotate it around both directions. Apply a little bit of traction to the finger by gripping each finger, straightening your arms, and leaning back using your bodyweight to gently pull. Move laterally to medially, from the pinky to the thumb.

Your grip should hold across the top and bottom of the fingers. Make sure that you do not press along the sides of the fingers. This way, you can squeeze tightly enough without hurting.

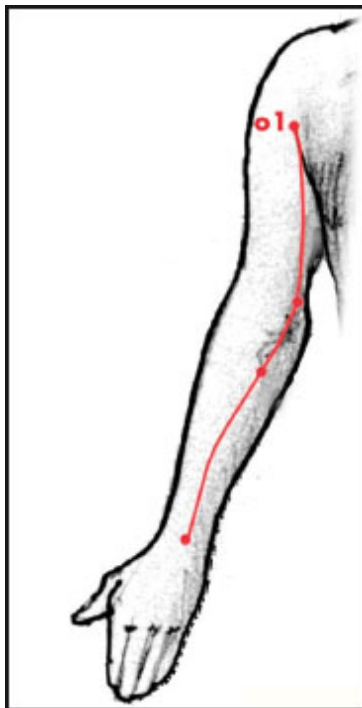
40. Stretch, Palm Press, and Thumb Press Outer Arm *Sen*

The procedures for massaging the *sen* in the arms are very similar to those for the legs. We will be performing the same three basic steps, and will follow the same A-B-C-B-A pattern with our stretches, palm presses, and thumb presses.

Kneeling beside the client, bring her arm close to her body in order to keep it aligned, with the palm facing down. To stretch the arm, place one of your palms on the top of her hand and the other palm on the top of her shoulder. Use a butterfly position for your hands and lean forward with your bodyweight to apply pressure evenly. Next, palm press from her wrist to her shoulder and back. Now, work the *ol sen* with thumb presses, moving from her fingers up to her shoulder and back.



Finish the A-B-C-B-A pattern by repeating the palm press and stretch.



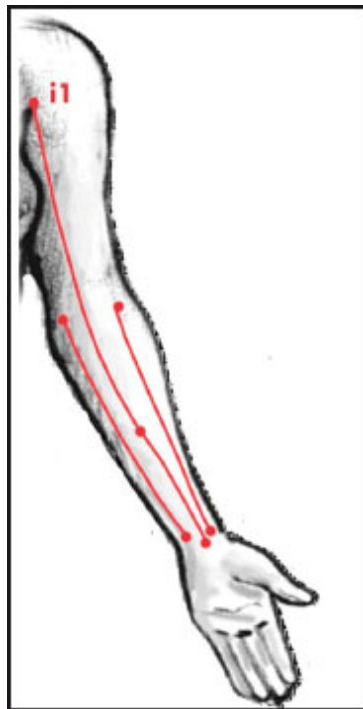
41. Stretch, Palm Press, and Thumb Press Inner AIII Sen

Bring the arm out to a 90° angle with her palm facing up, and adjust your posture to face the client's arm. Again, start with the stretch. Place one of your hands on the client's palm, and the other hand on her shoulder, and apply your bodyweight to align her arm.



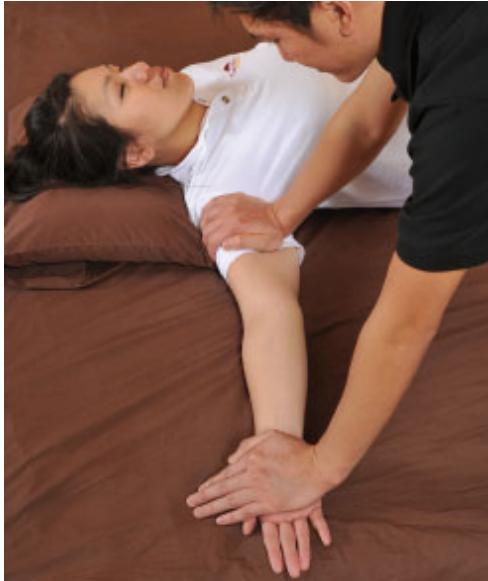
Next, palm press from her wrist to shoulder and back. Then, thumb press the sen. Move along the outer branches first, moving from the wrist to the crease in the elbow, and then back again. Then go up line **i1** along the midline of the forearm, from the wrist all the way to the armpit (or just short of it), and then back down. Be sure to press gently if in the armpit.

Finish the A-B-C-B-A pattern by repeating the palm press and stretch.



42. Opening the Wind Gate

Starting at the client's wrist, palm press up toward the armpit. Then, place your hand at the brachial plexus, at the point where you feel the brachial pulse. Apply solid, even pressure to this point with your flat palm while holding the client's arm steady with your other hand. Hold this spot for 30 seconds, and then release. As the blood rushes back down the arm, palm press with both your hands back down to the wrist.



43. Rotate Wrist

Gently rotate the wrist clockwise and counterclockwise. Hold just below the wrist with one of your hands, and then interlace your fingers with the other, so as to support the joint while mobilizing it.



44. Rotate Elbow

Rotate the client's elbow, placing your hand on the bicep to both support and immobilize it. Rotate the elbow in both directions.



45. Rotate Shoulder

Hold the upper arm with your inside hand on the triceps or behind the elbow, and place your outside hand on her shoulder. Rotate the shoulder up toward the ear and down to the mat. Rotating the shoulder in this direction encourages the muscles in the shoulder, neck, and chest to open. Rotate several times. Next, shake out the arm to relax it.



46. Pull arm to Stretch

Grip both sides of the hand just below the wrist. Pull the client's arm in all directions to stretch out the shoulder and elbow.

First, bring the arm toward the feet with the palm facing down.



Next, bring the arm out to the side with the palm facing up.



Last, bring the arm above the head and slightly off to the side with the palm facing up.



In all cases, extend your arms and lean back to achieve the stretch using your bodyweight instead of your upper body strength. Don't pull so hard that the client's back lifts from the mat or her shoulders come out of alignment. If your client moves too much during this step, put your hand on her shoulder to keep her back securely on the mat as you stretch her arm.

47. Medial arm Pull

Take a bent-knee stance across your client (without sitting on her body). Place her hand, palm down, over your leg just above your knee. Place one of your hands on top. Then place your other hand on her shoulder to keep her scapula on the ground while you lunge in the direction of your bent knee, using your body-weight to stretch her arm across her torso and toward the hip on the opposite side.



4 8. Stretch the triceps

Bring the client's arm up so her hand is in front of her and her palm is facing toward you.



Now, plant her palm on the mat next to her ear, so that her fingers are pointing toward her shoulder. In this position, as you apply the pressure to the elbow, the wrist will release rather than compress. You may need to apply bodyweight with one hand on her thigh, as in previous steps, to keep her back solidly on the mat.





Stretch the arm, release, and palm press along the triceps from the elbow to the shoulder and back.



Next, thumb press along **ol** from the elbow to the shoulder and back. Finish by repeating the palm press and stretch before releasing the arm.

VARIATION: For Less Flexible Clients



If a client can't bend her wrist as depicted in Step 48, have her cup the back of her neck with her palm and perform the movements as described. This will not be as deep a stretch as shown in the photos of Step 48, but it is just as effective for less flexible clients.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Gomukhasana*

ENGLISH: Cow-Face Pose

POINTS: Both sit-bones grounding, keep top arm rotating so inner arm faces the ear; bottom arm shoulder blade towards spine, spread collarbones and lengthen back and neck

BENEFITS: Stretches hips, quadriceps, ankles, shoulders, triceps, and chest

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Shoulder injury, neck injury, hip injury

49. Palm Press arm above Head

After the intense stretch for the triceps, bring the client's hand and arm straight above her body with the palm facing up and palm press from the wrist to the shoulder and back. This will open the shoulder and relax the triceps.



50. Shake arm to Relax

Grip her hand and shake to relax the arm. Return it to the starting position, with the arm off to the side and the palm facing up.

repeat Steps 36-50 for opposite side



Abdominal Series

51. Finger Press Below Clavicles

Let your client's arms relax at her sides. Make sure to lay her out so that her shoulders are even and her arms fall evenly and naturally along her sides with palms facing up. Without placing any of your weight on her, straddle your client in order to achieve the best mechanical advantage with the bent-knee stance. Position your bodyweight over her torso, which is where you will be working. You can also perform this step in the standing position or kneeling

beside your client if you do not feel comfortable with the position shown in the photo. If you choose to stand, be sure your legs and back are straight as you perform this step in order to give yourself the advantage of proper body mechanics.

Maintaining straight fingers, straight wrists, straight arms, and a straight back, press with your bodyweight just below the client's clavicles. Your fingertips will fit neatly into the depressions just above the pectoral muscles. These are sensitive acupressure points that stimulate the upper respiratory tract and relax the upper body and arms. Start laterally, where the clavicle meets the shoulder, and move medially toward the sternum. Stop before you arrive at the sternum, so as not to press on bone, and then return to the shoulders. Finish by applying pressure to the same area with palm presses.



52. Finger Circle Rib Cage

This step provides a general massage of all of the muscles in the front of the torso. Note that massage work on the front of the torso does not follow the bottom-to-top pattern of the rest of the routine. Instead, begin this step just under the clavicles. Sweep your finger circles from the sides to the sternum,

following the contour of each rib, as if you were draining stagnant energy toward the heart.

For this step and the next, avoid the breast tissue. If either step is uncomfortable for female clients, skip it.



53. Thumb Press or Finger Press in the Intercostal Spaces

Start on the sides of the ribs, where the body meets the mat, and work toward the sternum. Use a thumb circle to locate the intercostal muscles, the muscles in the spaces between each rib. Then press lightly with your thumbs or fingers along these spaces to stimulate the muscles.



Work from the top of the torso toward the last rib, but be careful not to press on breast tissue. As you work, visualize the drainage of energy toward the heart.

Finish by applying gentle pressure on the solar plexus with your thumb.

54. Palm Circle and Press on Sternum

Place one or both palms on the sternum, fitting the base of your palm above the solar plexus. Apply a gentle palm press and palm circles.



IMPORTANT: This move involves a very gentle press downward, not a CPR compression!

If you or your client is uncomfortable with palms directly on the sternum, you can try one of the following:



Clasp your hands together in a prayer position. Then, use the sides of your hands to press and/ or circle the sternum.



Or, place your client's hand on the sternum, then place your hands over hers. Apply palm press and/or palm circle.

55. Palm Circles on Abdomen

Having brought the stagnant energy into the abdomen, steps 55-57 will flush it out through the navel, the source of the 10 major sen.

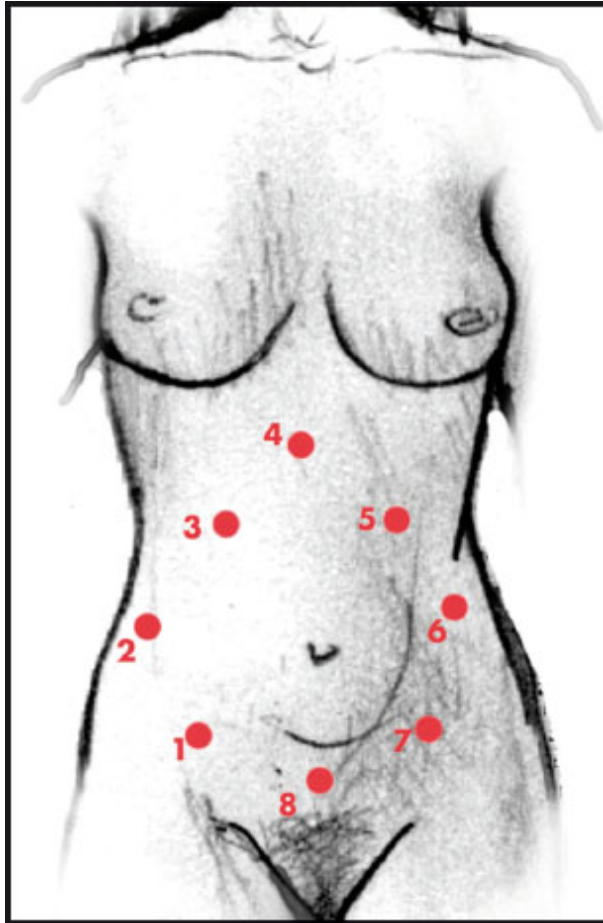
Use gentle palm circles for this step, starting above the client's right hip and moving clockwise in the direction of the colon. Do one or two cycles around the abdomen, finishing each cycle by placing your hand on the navel and performing a gentle palm press.

IMPORTANT: In a classic Thai Massage, you should use only light contact with the abdomen, which is a sensitive and vulnerable area. The abdomen carries many emotions, and clients can experience powerful reactions during this part of the session. Often, the first time I work with a client, I barely touch the abdomen, just making light contact to establish a relationship and build trust. If your client is uncomfortable at this point, you should skip the remaining steps for the abdomen.



56. Palm Press abdomen

You can use three different techniques for the abdomen as part of the classic routine. However, you may not want to use all three techniques in a single session—at least not unless your client wants you to focus on the abdomen.



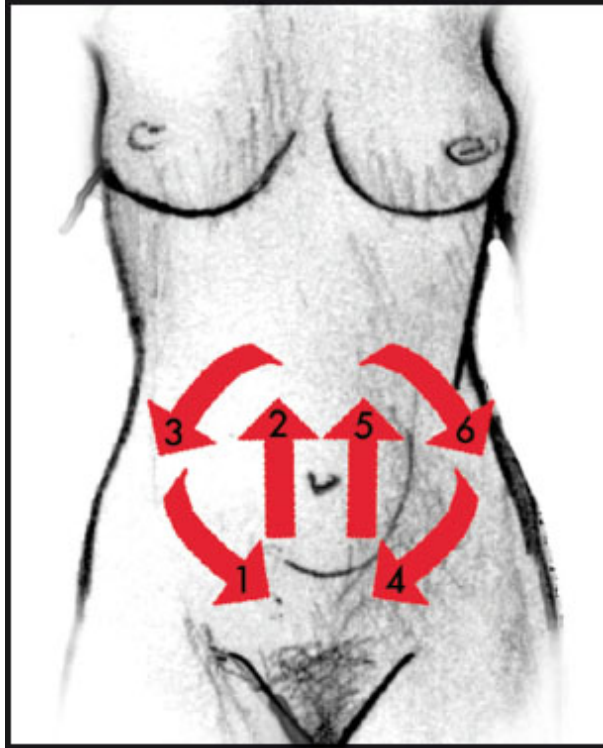
For the first option, press the eight areas shown in the diagram with gentle palm presses. Instruct the client to take a deep breath before each area is pressed. As she inhales, place the heel of your palm on each area with your fingertips pointed toward the navel.



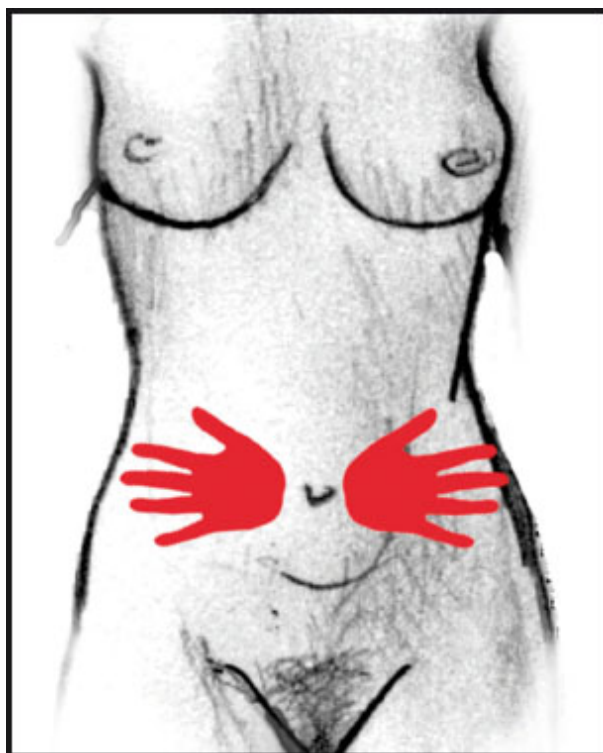
As the client exhales, apply pressure downward into the abdomen. As she inhales her next breath, let the pressure off slowly. Move to the next point.



Work your way around the circle, following the course of the colon. You may repeat the cycle a second or third time if your client is comfortable. Following the colon assists in the passage of waste products, and flushes toxins, lymph, and stagnant energy out of the body. It is particularly good for promoting digestive regularity and treating constipation.



The second option for abdominal work (on the left) is to make two separate circles on either side of the abdomen with palm presses. Press along the right side first, as shown by the first three arrows in the diagram. Begin at the psoas, proceed up to the solar plexus, and then down underneath the rib cage. Each press should be slow and synchronized with the client's breathing, always leading with the base of your palm as described above. Next, perform the mirror image of those same presses on the other side.



The last of the three options (on the right) is to place your palms in butterfly position on either side of the navel. Press first on the left side of the abdomen, then on the right. Each time, palm press slowly in synchronization with the client's breathing. You alternate between each side at least 10 times. These motions pump and release the organs, flushing out stagnant energy.



Correlations with Yoga

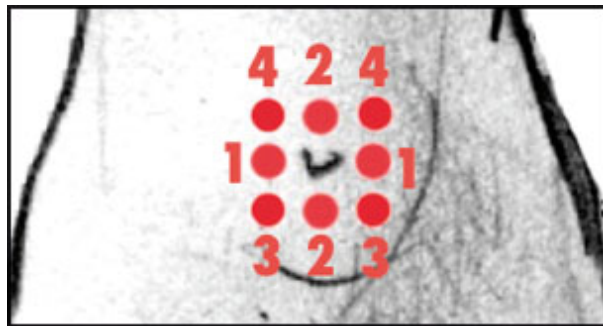
The variations shown here are closely related to the yogic cleanse known as *navli kriya*. In this exercise, the practitioner alternately contracts the muscles on each side of the abdomen.

BENEFITS: This practice is considered to be a massage for the internal organs, as well as to improve digestion, excretion, and energy flow throughout the organ systems. It is also considered beneficial for post-partum women.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Heart disease, hypertension, hernia, pregnancy, ulcers

57. Thumb Press around Navel

Apply thumb presses around the navel, the source of all 10 *sen*. Press gently but firmly on the eight points in the diagram, approximately 1 inch from the navel. Work them one or two at a time as indicated on the diagram, pressing and holding each pair for 10 seconds.



When pressing these points, you should feel the client's pulse.

This step can be considered an Opening the Wind Gate manoeuvre for all 10 major Thai *sen*, so avoid this step when contraindicated. Also be sure to never press directly on the navel, as this would be highly uncomfortable to your client.



58. Finger Press Psoas

If your client is enjoying the abdominal work thus far, you can use the tips of your fingers to press along the iliopsoas muscle, just inside the hip bone. Press downward, and slightly pull the pelvis toward you.



Be sure you are pressing the muscle and not the colon, which will be sensitive to this type of pressure. If your client's psoas is tight, you can ask them to bend their legs for comfort. Finish by finger circling or palm pressing the area to relax it.



59. Back Lift

Place your hands, palms up, under your client's body. Finger circle the muscles along the sides of the spinal column (without actually touching it),

using the weight of your client's body to apply pressure. Lower your center of gravity by bending at your knees. With straight arms, open chest, and shoulders back, straighten out your knees to stand up while drawing your hands along the waist or lower back from the midline to her sides. Don't attempt to lift her yet; just relax the muscles in the back and prepare your client for the next phase of this step. Reposition your hands slightly higher on the client's back, and repeat at least three times.

You may notice your client's body rising from the mat a little bit, signaling that she is flexible enough to advance to the lift. If either the client is not flexible enough, or if you sense at this point that they will be too heavy for you, you should finish this step here.



If you want to lift the client, place your hands firmly on her back as before, positioned just below the last rib and not touching the spine. With straight arms, open chest, shoulders back, and a straight back, straighten your legs to stand up. Your client's back will arch, while her head remains on the mat.



IMPORTANT: Only attempt the lift if you have the strength to do so! To lower your client back to the ground, set her down between your legs. As you place her onto the mat, her chin will tuck and her neck will be protected from overextension.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Sirshapada Bhumi Sparshasana*

ENGLISH: Head and Feet to Ground Pose

BENEFITS: Stretches spine, quadriceps, hip flexors, abdomen, shoulders, neck, and chest; strengthens legs, arms, and wrists

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Back or neck injury, weak upper body, high or low blood pressure, headache

60. rock Hips to relax

When you have lowered the client back down, rock her hips to relax the lower back and ilio-psoas muscles. As you rock, try to get some motion in her pelvis and the sacroiliac joint.

Continue the rocking motion by palm pressing down the client's hips and thighs. Palm Circle the knees, palm press the lower legs, and finish this part of the routine by palm pressing down to her feet.



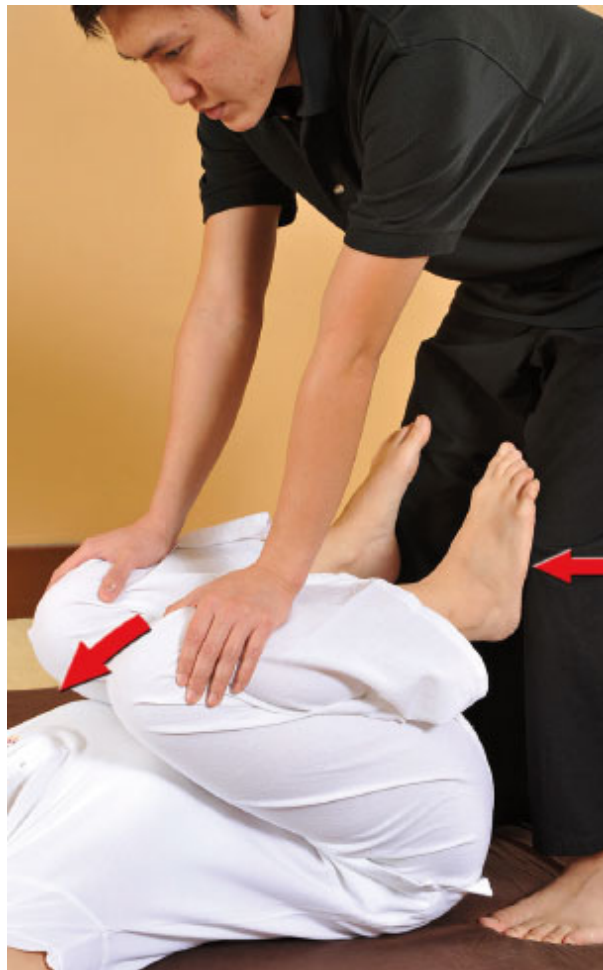
Full-Body Stretches

61. Gentle Back Stretch

We have come to the portion of the classical routine that has made Thai Massage one of the most exciting modalities of massage. Having worked with the Thai *sen* and the joint mobilization in the limbs and torso, we are ready to proceed to the deeper and more involved full-body stretches that compress and release the entire *sen* system as a unit. In this segment of the massage, body mechanics will be a critical concern for the practitioner, and proper alignment and breathing will be of utmost importance for the client.

We'll begin this segment with a simple back stretch to warm up the back in preparation for the work to come. Apply your knees to the soles of your client's feet and your hands to her shins, just under the knees. Bend your knees to move her knees toward her chest. Don't lift her pelvis from the ground, but do allow her to experience a stretch through the lower back and hips.

Remember, the forward motion of the stretch comes from applying your bodyweight. Your hands should guide your client's knees down and into her chest, but you should not use upper body strength to execute this step.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Pavana Muktasana*

ENGLISH: Wind-Relieving Pose

POINTS: Long spine; forehead towards floor; sitbones towards heels

BENEFITS: Stretches muscles of lower back and spine; improves digestion & elimination

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Abdominal pain, hernia, severe depression



62. Lower Hamstring Stretch

Making sure the client's back remains aligned and her hips remain square, walk her legs to 90° (if she can go this far). Bend one leg and bring her ankle to rest on her opposite leg (either above or below the knee) to keep the leg straight and stretch the hamstrings. Start on the left hamstrings for a female client or the right ones for a male.

Further stretch the hamstring by applying elbow presses and/or forearm rolls to the foot.



63. Upper Hamstring Stretch

Next, lower your body into the bent knee stance with your outside leg right along the side of the straightened leg, and rest her leg against your chest and shoulder. Engage the foot with your outside hand. Leaning forward, bring her knee toward her shoulder on the same side and her foot toward her ear. Place your inner hand at the insertion of the hamstring or in another place that helps you to keep the client's hips square, to keep the sacrum down on the mat, and to minimize any strain on the client's lower back.

Remember your body mechanics: keep your arms straight, chest open, shoulders back, and back straight. With your body in the correct position, you should be able to perform this stretch strictly with bodyweight, as opposed to using upper body strength.

VARIATION: For Hamstring Stretch



You may choose to place your leg in front of the client's bent knee to more easily straighten her leg. You can use this position for both Steps **62** and **63**.

For Step **63**, move her leg forward by bending into your leading knee.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Janu Sirsasana*

ENGLISH: Knee to Head Pose

POINTS: Foot to inner thigh of opposite leg; ground sit-bones and square navel over long leg; fold forward, revolve same-side ribs away from leg and opposite side ribs towards leg; lengthen spine

BENEFITS: Stretches hamstrings, groins, calves, spine; strengthens abdomen, spine; improves digestion; reduces menstrual discomfort; alleviates anxiety, stress, and depression by calming nervous system

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Knee pain, asthma, diarrhea

64. Pigeon Pose

Maintaining your bent-knee stance, relax her straight leg over your bent leg. Now, shift your focus to her other leg. Adjust your hands so that your inner hand is pressing on the top of the foot, and your outer hand is pressing outside the shin of her bent leg. Using your bodyweight, lean forward to apply pressure to stretch the hip and groin of her bent leg.

Repeat **62-64** for the other leg



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Eka Pada Rajakapotasana*

ENGLISH: One-Legged Pigeon

POINTS: Long spine; open chest; shoulders back; both hips on mat

BENEFITS: Stretches quadriceps, inner thighs, groins, hip flexors, abdomen, chest and neck

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Lower back pain, knee pain, ankle pain

65. The Plow

IMPORTANT: Before beginning, make sure the client is aligned properly and the pillow has been removed from behind her head!

The client's legs should be together and her back straight. If the client's hamstrings are too tight, she will bend her knees as you bring her feet

upward to a 90° angle. If this occurs, you may wish to skip this step for now and stretch your client's hamstrings using Steps 62 and 63 until such a time as they are flexible enough for this step.



To put the client into the plow position, resume your bent-knee position at her side, ready to provide support if necessary. Placing your forward hand at her heels, begin to push her feet over her head. When her sacrum first starts to rise off the ground, slide your other hand under her back to offer support

and keep her steady. Keep this hand on her sacrum or lower back while you lunge forward, bringing her legs up over her head and to the floor behind her head.

When the client's feet touch the floor, have her tuck her toes under, and then use your hand to press her heels away from her head to elongate her legs. Meanwhile, maintain a hand on her lower back, pulling up in order to encourage her back to straighten up.

To execute this pose properly, you must transfer the client's bodyweight onto her shoulders while supporting and stabilizing her body. Because you will need to assist her in transitioning in and out of this posture, you will want to be sure to set yourself up properly in advance. I suggest you use your dominant hand to support her sacrum, since this hand will bear more of the client's weight.



Of course, not all clients will reach the floor, and if they do not, you must support their legs continually throughout the step so as not to put strain on their back muscles or spine. (It is critical that you not attempt this step with someone who is too heavy for you to support throughout the step!)

Continue to support your client in this pose while she breathes deeply for five breaths. In order to protect the neck, you must not let the client's head

roll to either side, or permit her to fidget while in this posture. Providing coaching to your client before and throughout this step is the best way to ensure they understand the benefits and dangers.

When you feel the client has stretched enough, straighten her out by retracing the steps you took to come into the pose. Be sure to support her lower back all the way back down to the mat.

Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Halasana*

ENGLISH: Plow Pose

POINTS: Back of head to floor; spine long; collarbones spreading; shoulder blades towards spine; hips over shoulders

BENEFITS: Stretches hamstrings, calves, spine, shoulders, chest, neck; strengthens muscles of the back; alleviates mild back pain, headache, sinusitis, insomnia; alleviates anxiety, stress and depression by calming nervous system

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Pregnancy, neck or shoulder injury, asthma, high blood pressure, diarrhea

VARIATIONS: **For Less Flexible Clients**



If your client has very tight hamstrings or back muscles, you may not be able to get very far with the regular plow. In this case, the client is permitted to bend her knees in order to receive some of the benefits of the back stretch. Your client will need every bit of support in this posture that she did in the full plow, so be sure to be immediately next to her, and to help her in and out of the posture as described in Step 65.

Over time, clients who use this pose may wish to experiment with straightening out first one leg and then the other. Eventually, they will be able to begin to straighten both legs simultaneously for increasing periods of time.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Karna Pidasana*

ENGLISH: Ear Pressure Pose

POINTS: Back of head to floor, knees towards ears; round spine

BENEFITS: Stretches muscles of the back and neck

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Neck or spinal injury, high blood pressure, asthma, severe depression

66. Butterfly

Before beginning this pose, straighten out the client's back again and make sure her hips are aligned. Hold her legs open at about a 30° angle. Instruct her to spread her arms out to the side, at a 90° angle to her body.



Carefully step over her legs, and place your feet so they are directly under her armpits. Wrapping her legs around yours, bring her feet in front of your thighs, and hook her heels around your quadriceps or below your knees.

Now, apply bodyweight through your hands to press her feet straight down to her forehead. Once you have her feet as far down as you wish to go, hold them in place, and slowly straighten out your knees. This will send her

sacrum back toward the floor, and deepen her stretch. Hold the pose over five deep breaths.



NOTE: this is not the Bound Angle Pose from Step 70, where the feet are pressed toward the navel. In this pose, you are aiming to bring the feet toward the client's face. If she is extremely flexible, you may even aim to place her feet above her head, (see yoga pose on next page).



Correlations with Yoga

SANSKRIT: *Dwi Pada Sirsasana*

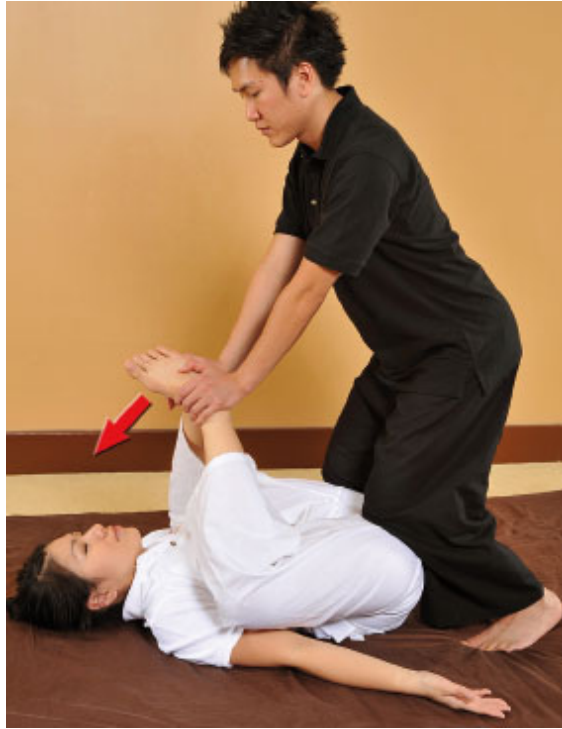
ENGLISH: Two Legs Behind the Head Pose

POINTS: This is an advanced pose and is not recommended without the guidance of a teacher

BENEFITS: Stretches hips and groins

CONTRAINDICATIONS: High or low blood pressure, heart trouble, knee or hip injury

VARIATION: **For Less Flexible Clients**



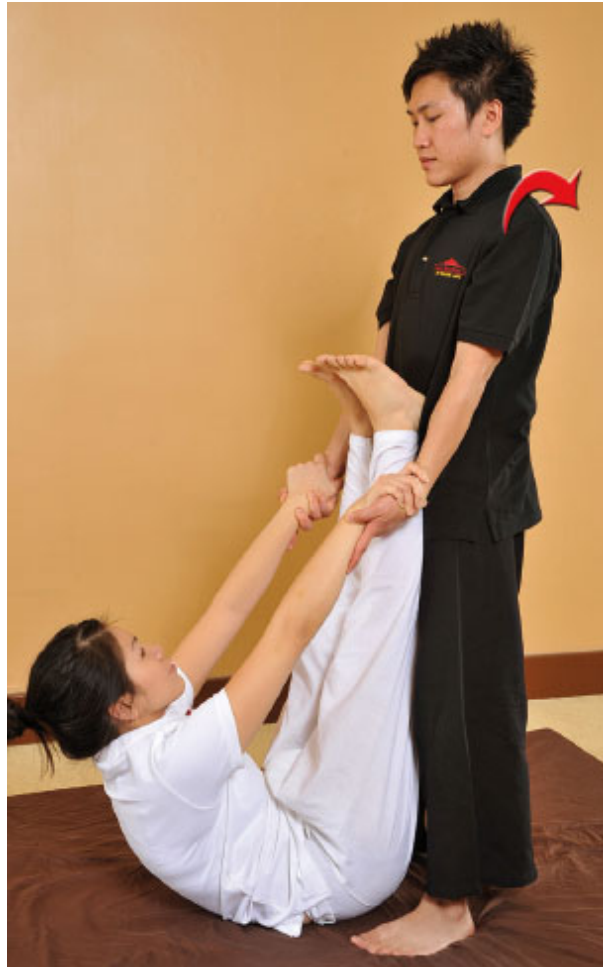
This move is easier when a smaller individual works on a larger client, and is also useful as a warmup or replacement to Step 66 for less flexible clients. Place your feet outside and in line with the client's hips. Kneel on the back of her hamstrings at the insertions. Keep your knees on the insertions, and keep your body-weight steady. Apply your bodyweight forward, while pressing her feet toward her face.

With someone who is larger and less flexible, you should be able to apply your entire bodyweight and use the client's muscular tension to keep your balance. If someone is flexible enough that you are in danger of falling forward, this is a sign you should use Step 66 instead.

67. Double Leg Pull-Up

Straighten out the client's legs and ask for her arms. (If either of you have sweaty hands, use talcum powder for safety.) Lower yourself to grasp her hands by bending your knees, while keeping your back straight. Be sure to hold your arms in such a way that your palms are facing forward, and her palms are facing toward you. This is the best grip for proper alignment of the client's shoulders and elbows.

Gently stand up, bringing your client with you (be sure to use your legs to lift her rather than upper body strength). This will provide a good stretch for her hamstrings, back, and shoulders. Once you are standing, roll your shoulders back and open your chest. Hold for at least one breath. Slowly set her back down on the mat, and repeat the pull-up three times, in synchronization with her exhalations.



(Note this move is not ideal for a heavy client, and such cases you may want to skip ahead to the next step. A similar pose is performed in Step 71 without the need to lift your client.)



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Pada Hastasana*

ENGLISH: Hand to Foot Pose

POINTS: Engage quadriceps; lengthen spine

BENEFITS: Stretches backs of legs, upper back; strengthens knee joints, front of legs, and shoulders; relieves headache, mild depression, and anxiety

CONTRAINDICATIONS: High blood pressure, heart trouble

68. Cross-Legged Pull-Up

Use your hands to move the client's legs into a cross-legged position, as if she were sitting. Ask her for her hands again and use the same grip as for the previous step. Do three more pull-ups in synchronization with her exhalation, trying to use your bodyweight instead of muscle strength to lift. Each time, finish the lift by rolling your shoulders back and opening your chest.



On the third pull-up hold the client in position, and start to step your feet backwards.

Continue holding her wrists as you walk backward, pulling her into a seated position. Finish by setting her palms on the floor.



69. Forward Bend with Crossed Legs

This is the first in a series of forward bends. Perform palm presses with “butterfly hands” on both sides of the client’s spine, being careful not to press on the vertebrae. Starting just above the iliac crest, apply palm presses with your bodyweight. Your own position should be above the client, so that your back and arms can remain straight.

Continue with palm presses until you reach her shoulder blades. Do not go higher than the shoulder blades or C7, because this will begin to strain the neck.

The object with this stretch is not to bring the client’s head to the floor, but to bring her navel to the floor while keeping a natural lumbar curve in her spine.

Stay in tune with your client’s breathing, and move with this rhythm. If your client prefers stronger pressure, use forearm rolls or elbow presses on the back muscles, being sure to never press on bone.



To help her up, put your hand on her lower back to keep it straight and put your other hand on her trapezius for support. Pull back with your hand on the trapezius and push in with the hand on her lower back. Use this same method of bringing your client out of all the forward bends in Step **69-72**.



70. Bound-Angle Pose

The next in our series of forward bends is similar to the last, except for the positioning of the client's legs. Move the client's legs so that the soles of her feet are together, with her heels close to her groin.

Use gentle palm presses to press her back down into a forward bend. Start at the iliac crest and walk up to the scapula, then back down. Use palm presses, forearm rolls and/or gentle elbow presses. To deepen the stretch for the groin, position her feet closer to her pelvis.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Baddha Konasana Variation*

ENGLISH: Bound Angle Pose Variation

POINTS: Skin of inner thigh moves towards knees

BENEFITS: Stretches groins, hips, and knee joints; relieves menstrual discomfort and sciatica

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Knee injury, lower back injury



71. Forward Bend with Straight Legs

Straighten out the client's legs. Bring her feet together, encouraging her to keep her knees straight and toes pointed up.

Apply palm presses, forearm rolls, or elbow presses as you did with the other forward bends.

In this pose, be vigilant that the client does not bend her knees, point her toes, or flop her legs out to the side. It is also very important for the client's back and neck to stay in the neutral position.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Paschimottanasana*

ENGLISH: Stretch of the West Pose

POINTS: Engage quadriceps muscles; tilt pubic bone forward and sit-bones backward as you lengthen sternum towards shins, keeping spine long

BENEFITS: Stretches muscles of the posterior leg and back; strengthens abdomen; alleviates anxiety, stress, menstrual discomfort

CONTRAINDICATIONS: heart problems



72. Forward Bend with Wide-Angle Legs

Move to the front of the client and bring her legs out into a wide angle. Coach her to bend from the waist, not the upper back, and to bring her navel to the floor.

Offer your hands to your client with your palms facing to the ceiling. (This will ensure proper alignment of her shoulders and elbows.) Hold each other's wrists, and place your feet on her legs above her knees. Apply a bit of body-weight by leaning back, bringing her into a forward bend. You do not need to press into her legs with your feet, or to pull her arms sharply toward you. Simply applying a bit of body-weight in an even, controlled manner will give the client a full stretch.

Hold the client at her maximum over the course of five deep breaths, then release.

For more flexible clients, place your feet below the knees and grip higher on the arms or even on the sides of the ribcage for a deeper and more controlled stretch.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Upavistha Konasana*

ENGLISH: Wide Angle Pose

POINTS: Engage quadriceps muscles; tilt pubic bone forward and sit-bones backward as you lengthen sternum towards floor, keeping spine long

BENEFITS: Stretches groins, inner thighs, posterior legs; strengthens spine

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Lower back injury



”Motorcycle” Back Stretch

This will be the first of our back-bending steps. Alignment of the shoulders is critical in all of these stretches, and you will have to be sure to keep an eye on your clients during these moves.

Taking the client’s arms behind her back, hold on to each other’s wrists. The client’s elbows should point in toward each other, the shoulders and chest opening and the scapula coming together. Place the tips of your toes just

under her scapula in the middle of her back, keeping your knees bent at 90°. From this position, you should be able to keep your balance using your client as an anchor for your body-weight.

Apply a bit of pressure with your feet, straightening your legs, and activating your toes. Press slowly, in synchronization with the client's exhalation. Be sure not to dig in your toes, or to press directly on bone.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Ustrasana*

ENGLISH: Camel Pose

POINTS: Inner thighs move towards one another as you tuck tailbone; take shoulders towards ears then down back and towards spine to open chest; round upper back as you slowly descend; release neck if comfortable

BENEFITS: Stretches spine, quadriceps, hip flexors, abdomen, shoulders, neck and chest; strengthens spine

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Back or neck injury, high or low blood pressure, headache



Incorrect Alignment

Step 73 is the first of several back bends where it is critical to have the client's shoulders in the correct position before beginning the stretch. If the shoulders are rolled forward, as shown above, when you pull straight back on the arms you will compromise the neck and shoulders.

To achieve proper alignment for back stretches, you must rotate the shoulders outward, opening the chest, and bringing the scapula together. (To help my students remember which direction to rotate the arms, I often refer to this move as “revving the motorcycle.”)

It is very important to perform this rotation on all clients. However, as you rotate the shoulders, someone with hyperextendable elbows may rotate unnaturally far, potentially causing strain or injury in the posture. Attention to proper alignment is of utmost importance, and you will have to make the decisions that are best for your client.

Release the stretch and repeat three times.



Correct Alignment



74. Fish Pose

The next pose flows naturally from the “Motorcycle” Back Stretch. Walk or move your feet down the client’s back until they are against the client’s pelvis

and your heels are on the mat. Straighten your legs out so that the backs of your knees are completely in contact with the mat.

Release the client's arms. Placing your dominant hand in the middle of her back and the other on one side of her trapezius muscle, guide and support her as she relaxes back into your dominant hand. Do not allow her to engage her back muscles, and be sure you are fully supporting her weight.

As you lower the client, switch your hand on the trapezius to the back of the client's head to support the neck. Finish lowering her onto your legs.



Your toes should now be in position to arch the lower back. Hook your fingers into the base of the skull, and pull very gently toward you to provide traction to the entire neck and back. Allow your client to relax fully over five deep breaths.



To release this position, retrace your steps, being sure to support her shoulders and neck as you lift the client back up again. If the client feels too much pressure or sharpness in the lower back, or if your own toes are uncomfortable in this position, place a pillow between your feet and her body.



 **Correlations with Yoga**



SANSKRIT: *Matsyasana*

ENGLISH: Fish Pose

POINTS: Lift sternum; release neck

BENEFITS: Stretches hip flexors, abdomen, intra- costal muscles, spine and neck; strengthens spine and neck; stimulates digestion

CONTRAINDICATIONS: High or low blood pressure, neck or back injury, headache, insomnia

75. Seated Spinal Twist

Cross the client's legs. The idea for this step is to provide a gentle twist of the back while simultaneously lifting the torso to lengthen the spine.

Place the client's hands behind her head and have her interlock her fingers. Hook your arms under the armpits and hold onto her forearms as shown in the picture.

The position of both the client's and the therapist's legs is also important. The photo shows one of the practitioner's knees on the ground and the shin of the other leg across the client in order to brace her. This prevents her from sliding on the mat, lessening the stretch and potentially compromising her back.

Get low, lift your client, straighten her back, and open her chest, being sure to work from your core strength to avoid injury. From this position, you can now rotate the client's torso toward your planted knee to provide a spinal twist. Your shin on her inner leg will keep her firmly on the ground. Be careful not to lean to either side.



Come back to center, and repeat this movement three times in synchronization with the client's exhalation. Each time you twist, you can go a little bit farther, but be sure her spine stays perfectly erect throughout this step.

Next, switch your body position to the other side, and repeat the movements in the opposite direction.



VARIATION: **For Increased Leverage**



You may prefer to perform this movement from a standing position. Use one of your feet to hold down her leg. Lift under her armpits and rotate, holding your straight leg against her back to keep it erect. This allows a better mechanical advantage, especially when working on someone bigger than yourself.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Ardha Matsyendrasana*

ENGLISH: Half Lord-of-the-Fishes Pose

POINTS: Sole of top leg foot and top leg sit-bone both reaching for floor; back of head in line with sacrum; inhale to lengthen spine and exhale to deepen twist

BENEFITS: Stretches the shoulders, hips, spine, and neck; alleviates menstrual discomfort, asthma, backache, and sciatica; stimulates digestion

CONTRAINDICATIONS: spinal injury, neck injury, diarrhea

76. Back Lift

Straighten up the client's back by lifting her arms above her head. Place her hands in prayer-position over her head. Hold her hands just below the wrist. Place your knees just under her scapula. Simultaneously lift her arms up, and bend your knees into her back to provide a bit of an arch to the back as it stretches. This step straightens out the spine and relieves tension in the back and shoulders.



77. Thai Chop on Back

To relax the back muscles and finish up this section, use the Thai chop along either side of the spinal column. Start at the outer edge of the trapezius muscle (starting with the left for female clients or right for males), and work medially toward the spine. Then, chop down the back between the scapula and spine, making sure to avoid both. Continue chopping down until you reach the lower back, then return up the back and across the trapezius to the starting position before switching to chop the other side.



Be sure to regulate the strength of your chop according to the parts of the body you are working on. While your client may enjoy stronger chops on the trapezius and rhomboids, a lighter touch is called for on sensitive points such as the kidneys. Although it will make a loud noise, the Thai chop should be relaxing and soothing, never jarring.

Back Series

78. Knee Press Feet

Instruct your client to turn over onto her abdomen. I usually have my clients put the pillow under the chest so that the head can rest comfortably on the mat while the neck remains straight. You may need more than one pillow to make your client comfortable. Face cradles or horseshoe pillows are also a great addition to help keep the neck in alignment. Also, let her know that she can turn her head to either side.

On the back side of the body, we will begin again with the feet, and work our way up towards the head, following the Four Principles of Thai Massage (see

Chapter 3).

Place the client's legs about hip-width apart. Stabilize each foot at the heel and apply presses using your knee, applying the appropriate amount of pressure. Walk the knee presses from the toes to the heels and back, going up and down the feet several times.



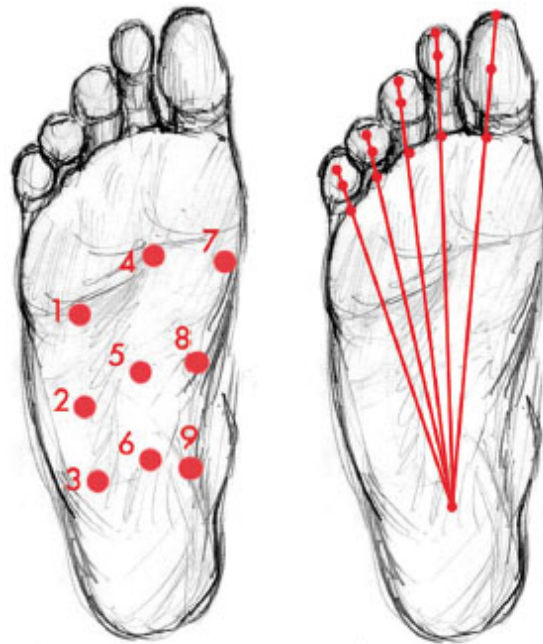
79. Thumb Press Foot Points

Repeat the nine points and the five lines on the soles and arches you learned in Steps 3 and 4.

Sometimes, a client's arches may cramp up when you press on the feet from this position. If this happens, relieve the pressure by putting her feet on your knees.



Remember to keep your chest open, shoulders back and relaxed, arms straight, and back straight.



VARIATION: **Foot and Heel Press**



For the client who enjoys stronger pressure, you can use your feet for Steps 78 and 79. Use the flat part of your foot in place of the knee press above, and use your heel for pressing the points. Obviously, the heel is not as precise of an instrument for pressing as the thumb, and you probably will not be able to be as accurate. However, if you press along the whole sole and arch of each foot and you will be sure to cover all of the points and lines.

This is one area of the body where most clients will not experience pain from heel pressure, but, of course, use caution the first time you perform this variation with a client.

80. Stretch Legs

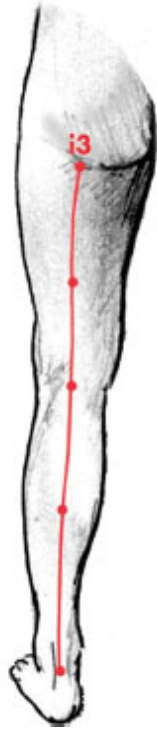
Make sure the client's toes are pointed in toward each other. Press down on both of the client's heels simultaneously, applying your bodyweight evenly. Straight arms will ensure best use of your bodyweight.



This is the beginning of the A-B-C-B-A pattern for leg line **i3**.

81. Palm Press Legs

Palm press the legs, starting just above the Achilles tendon. Skip over the back of the knee so you do not apply any pressure to the joint. Come all the way up to the top of the legs at the insertions of the hamstrings, and go back down. Remember all of the elements of a good palm press: “cat paws,” wide fingers, straight arms, bringing your body up over the client, shoulders over your hand, and gently rocking side to side as you walk up.





82. Thumb Press Along Line i3

For this leg line, you can work either with both of the client's legs simultaneously as shown, or else with one leg at a time. The *sen* goes straight up through the back of the calf, up through the middle of the back of the knee, and up the midline of the hamstring. Begin at the Achilles tendon, proceed up to the hamstring insertion, and return.





Finish the A-B-C-B-A Pattern by Repeating Palm Press (Step **81**) and Stretch (Step **80**).



83. Forearm Roll the Hamstrings (above) Begin with the left leg for a woman or the right leg for a man. Place the client's shin against your thigh to alleviate any pressure on the client's knee, bracing her lower leg to your hip as you proceed with this step.

Apply your bodyweight through a forearm roll, keeping your arm bent at 90°. Start behind the knee and work toward the hamstring insertions while maintaining good body mechanics. Then, work your way back down to the

knee. Each time, roll with forward momentum using bodyweight rather than your arm muscles.

Repeat this step several times with increasing intensity.

84. Elbow Press Along i3 (below) Use elbow presses on the hamstrings along line **i3**. Start near the knee, and move up the leg. Elbow pressing is done by leaning down into your elbow with your bodyweight. Release by unbending your elbow.

When you are finished with the elbow press, repeat the forearm roll in Step **83** to soothe the muscles.



85. Rotate Ankle

Rotate the ankle from this position. With your inside hand, grip above the ankle to stabilize the bent leg. Then, with your outside hand, hold the foot across the toes. Rotate the foot in large circles to increase the range of motion in the ankle. Do this five times clockwise and five times counterclockwise.



86. Calf Stretch

Bend the knee to a 90° angle. Then, apply an elbow press to the middle of the foot to provide a stretch.



87. Knee Flexion

Use your bodyweight to stretch the front of the client's shin and quadriceps. Place one of your hands on the soft part of the outer portion of her shin, the other hand on the top of her foot. Press her heel into her buttocks and shin toward the ground. Remember to use straight arms to translate your bodyweight effectively.

Stretch the client's leg three times in synchronization with the breathing.



Next, take a bent-knee stance. Use the hand that was pressing her shin to scoop under her knee. While again pressing her heel into her buttocks, lean into your bent knee stance away from the client, drawing her leg off the ground to stretch the quadriceps, hip flexor, and psoas muscles. Repeat this three times along with the client's exhalations.

Repeat Steps 83-87 for the other side.



ॐ Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Dhanurasana*

ENGLISH: Bow Pose

POINTS: Pull on ankles is very gentle to protect knees; inner thighs towards one another; tuck tailbone; spread collarbones and lift sternum

BENEFITS: Stretches spine, quadriceps, hip flexors, abdomen, shoulders, neck, and chest; strengthens legs, arms

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Pregnancy, back or neck injury, high or low blood pressure, headache

VARIATIONS:

There are other ways of performing Step 87, and you can experiment to see what works for you with particular clients.



The first variation - a double knee flexion - stretches both knees, which gives a lower back stretch as well. Take the client's feet and cross one over the other on the sacrum. Apply your bodyweight evenly down on the tops of both her feet. Then switch her feet and repeat.

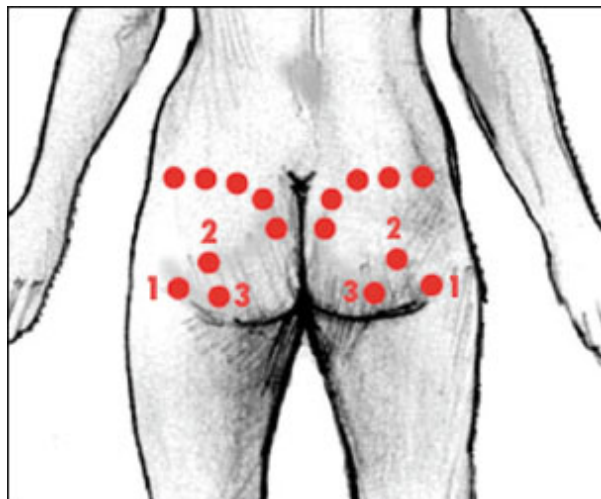


The second variation is similar but calls for the ankles to be crossed. This will increase the stretch, and should be used on your more flexible clients.

! 88. Thumb Press Hip Points

Thumb Press the hip points shown in the dia-I gram, using your bodyweight. There are points around the head of the femur and along the ridge of the iliac crest. Press the three femur I points first, in the order shown. Then, press the I iliac points, as always moving from the outside toward the midline of the body and then back out again. Press right along, but never directly on, the bone.

For this step, you may work with each side I individually, or both simultaneously, as shown in the photo.



89. Finger Press or Elbow Press Gluteal Muscles

For this step you will be straddling your client or kneeling beside her for maximum body mechanics advantage. Make sure to cover the entire glutes, but be sure you stay away from any bones.



Start with finger circles and presses to test your client's sensitivity. If the client wants more pressure, you can use the elbows (or even the knees). If you use the elbow, lean in to apply pressure with your bodyweight and release by unfolding your arm. When you are finished pressing, cool off the area with a forearm roll.



90. Palm Circle Sacrum

This palm circle is similar to what we did with the sternum. Palm circle all around the sacrum using cupped hands. Don't apply too much bodyweight as you are pressing on a bone. Finger or thumb circles also work well here.



91. Stretch Back (above)

This is the opening step for the A-B-C-B-A pattern on the back *sen*. Make sure your client's arms are resting down at her sides, palms up, and that her neck is straight.

This is a nice gentle cross-stretch. Place one of your hands up by the scapula, and the other hand on her lower back on the opposite side, with your fingers pointing outward in the butterfly position. Apply a press with bodyweight, making sure not to press on the spine.

Switch your hands and repeat for the other side.



92. Palm Press Back (below) In this step you will press the client's back with a walking palm press, from the iliac crest to the scapula and back. Keep your hands in butterfly position, and keep about two inches of space between your palms, so you are sure not to press directly on the client's spine.

The amount of pressure you use will depend on the client. Be sure to finish at the scapula, staying below C7, the final neck vertebra, so that you don't start compressing the neck.

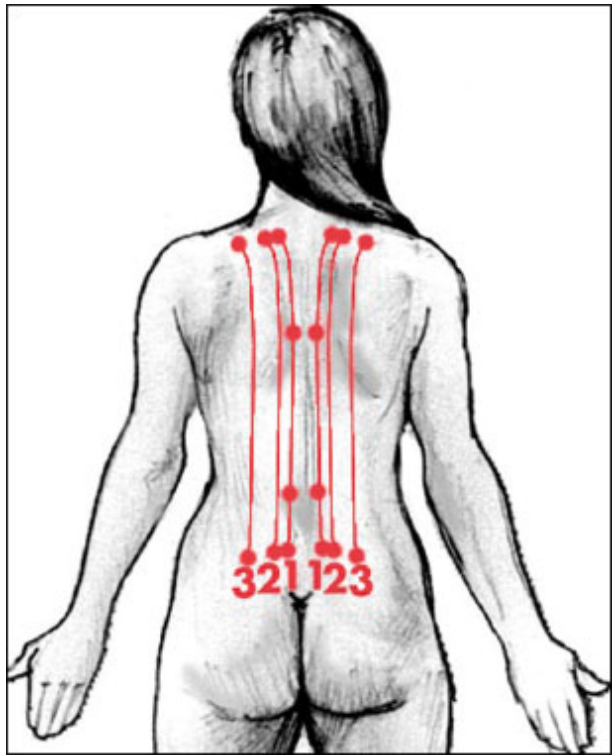


93. Thumb Press *Sen* of the Back

Following the guidelines in Chapter 3, press the three back *sen* with walking thumb presses. Press both lines 1 together, then both lines 2, then both lines 3, working from the iliac crest to the trapezius and back.

Finish A-B-C-B-A Pattern by Repeating Palm Press (Step 92) and Stretch (Step 91).





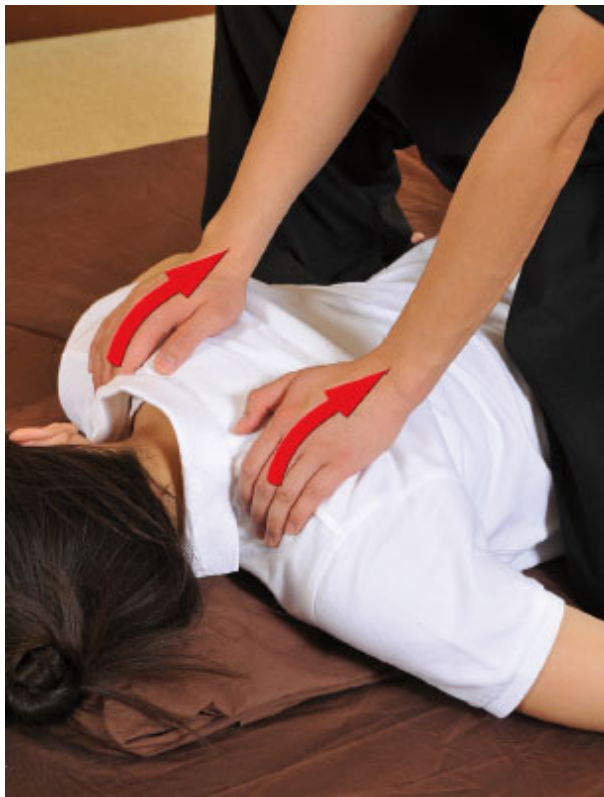


94. Palm Circle Rib Cage Palm Circle the rib cage as you did on the front of the body. Start out at the latissimus dorsi muscles (the “lats”) under the client’s armpits, and move toward the midline. As you circle, spread out your fingers to stimulate the intercostal muscles in between each rib. As you move medially across the back, visualize that you are moving stagnant energy from the lateral part of the torso toward the spine. Cover the entire back side of the rib cage.



95. Pull Trapezius Muscle

Finger circle the trapezius muscle. Start laterally, at the deltoids, and move in to the base of the client's neck. Then, hook in your fingers and pull on the trapezius muscle by leaning back with your bodyweight. This applies a finger press. Repeat several times, moving from the shoulders toward the neck and back. Be sure not to lift the client's head off the mat.



96. Shoulder Mobilization

Start with the left arm for a female client or the right arm for a male. Ask the client to turn her head to the opposite side. Bend the client's elbow, and place her hand behind her back, palm facing up. With her arm in this position, place your inside leg under her upper arm. Reach down with your outside hand, cupping the front of her shoulder and supporting her upper arm with your forearm. Sandwich her shoulder by placing your inside hand on her scapula. Then, rotate her shoulder by pushing forward towards her ear, lifting

upward to bring the shoulder back, and then pushing downward toward the mat. Movement in this direction encourages the opening of the shoulder and chest. Rotate the shoulder five times in this direction.



Next, place a bladed hand behind the scapula, and draw the client's shoulder up with your other hand. The scapula should roll over your bladed hand. This should be done in such a way that you are stretching the deltoids and the pectoral muscles.



The motion here is similar to the opening of the chest and shoulders with the back bends. (See Step 73.) Repeat several times.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Gomukhasana*

ENGLISH: Cow-Face Pose

POINTS: Both sit-bones grounding, keep top arm rotating so inner arm faces the ear; bottom arm shoulder blade towards spine; spread collarbones and lengthen back and neck

BENEFITS: Stretches hips, quadriceps, ankles, shoulders, triceps, and chest

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Shoulder injury, neck injury, hip injury

97. Press Under Scapula

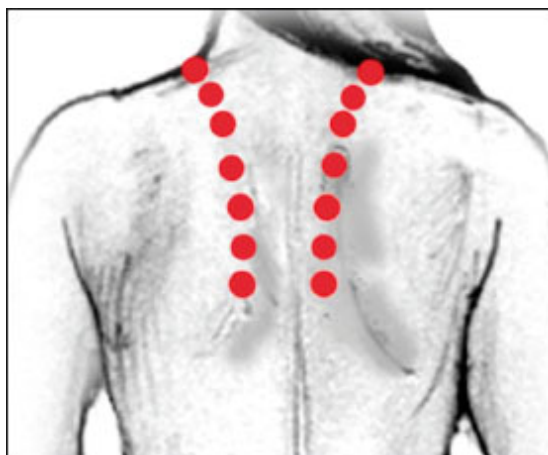
Holding the client's hand against her lower back in order to maintain the scapula's open position, finger press or thumb press into the rhomboids underneath the bone. Massage these muscles for a few minutes, from the lowest outer edge of the scapula, working around to the top.

These muscles are often among the tightest areas of the body, particularly with clients who work at occupations where they are seated all day.



ALTERNATE METHOD

For clients who enjoy a fair amount of pressure, and whose back muscles are particularly tight, elbow presses on the trapezius and rhomboid muscles are a great option.



Apply pressure evenly and steadily through your elbow, and release by unbending your arm. Apply pressure to the points shown in the diagram below, beginning with the points lower on the body and moving up toward

the neck. You will want to begin and end this move with palm, thumb, or finger circles to be sure to warm up and cool down the muscles.



98. Cobra

Bring the client's legs together. Kneel on her, so that your shins are across her buttocks and your knees are 3-4 inches above her iliac crest. Allow your weight to rest primarily on her buttocks.



IMPORTANT: Alignment is very important with this step. If your knees are properly placed, they will prevent the client's back from arching too much and stressing the lumbar spine. Take her arms at the wrists and “rev the motorcycle” in order to rotate her shoulders to open the chest, as we have done for all back bends. Next, do the same thing for yourself. Rotate your shoulders back, open your chest, and draw her arms alongside your body with a straight back. Her arms should now be parallel to the mat. Do not attempt to pull the client with upper body strength or lean back with your bodyweight.

When you have reached the proper position, ask your client to point her chin toward the ceiling. Hold this posture over five deep breaths.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Bhujangasana*

ENGLISH: Cobra Pose

POINTS: Engage legs; press top of little toes into mat; tuck tail; press evenly into hands; lift sternum; roll shoulder blades back and down spine; lengthen neck

BENEFITS: Stretches chest, shoulders, abdomen, and spine; strengthens spine and buttocks; alleviates asthma and sciatica

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Back, neck, or wrist injury, pregnancy, headache



Incorrect alignment

With the cobra stretch, as with all back bends, it is of utmost importance to understand the proper principles of alignment. These include the necessity to rotate the client's shoulders into correct position. You also need to ensure the stabilization of the client's pelvis to avoid injury to her lower back. All too often, the cobra is performed in such a way that undue stress is placed on the

lumbar spine. Performing the cobra incorrectly will leave her lumbar vulnerable to injury.

The cobra is one of the most famous steps from the classical routine. Unfortunately, it is also most often taught incorrectly. Look at the photo above showing one method with incorrect alignment. The therapist's back is hunched, and the client's is pinched. Failure to follow the principles of proper body mechanics leads to potential injury for both the practitioner and client.

As a Thai Massage therapist, you must be aware that the cobra is in fact a stretch for the thoracic spine, shoulders, and chest, as opposed to the lower back. With proper body mechanics, you will be able to isolate the stretch in this area while protecting her lower back. Your weight on her buttocks keeps her pelvis flat on the mat, and your knees will help protect against pinching her lower back. Rolling your shoulders back to raise the client into this stretch ensures your body is protected and minimizes any overexertion. As you pull back, notice how the client will stretch from the thoracic region.

Correlations with yoga



SANSKRIT: *Bhujangasana* Variation

ENGLISH: King Cobra Pose POINTS: See Bhujangasana

BENEFITS: Stretches chest, shoulders, abdomen, and spine; strengthens spine and buttocks; alleviates asthma and sciatica

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Back, neck, or wrist injury, pregnancy, headache

ADVANCED VARIATION: **The King Cobra**

The King Cobra is an advanced stretch for more flexible clients. Bend the client's knees to 90° and sit on her feet. Make sure you have a steady seat before you pull her up.



Next, take a hold of her shoulders by placing your hands through her armpits, and holding her deltoids with your palms. You can place the client's hands on your legs, or have her leave her palms on the mat by her head if she is less flexible (as shown in the yoga correlation photo). If you bring her hands to your legs, be sure to first rotate her arm and shoulder to open the chest by “revving the motorcycle.”



Using your feet to push off, lean back, placing your bodyweight into her feet while you lift her shoulders off the mat. Ask her to point her chin up toward

the ceiling. Your arms and back should be straight. Use your legs to lift her, not your back or arms.

IMPORTANT: Your bodyweight should stabilize her pelvis and prevent her lumbar spine from taking the brunt of this stretch. However, if you see that the client's lower back is vulnerable in this position, skip this variation.

9. Single-Leg Locust

Take the bent-knee stance holding the client's ankle, and lean back. Use straight arms and your bodyweight. This helps to warm up the client's muscles and helps to test her flexibility. If you notice her hip rising off the mat, she is flexible enough for the next part of this pose.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Ardha Salabhasana* Variation

ENGLISH: Half-Locust Pose Variation

POINTS: Engage legs; tuck tailbone; lengthen spine Benefits: Stretches quadriceps, hip flexors, and lower back; strengthens spine, buttocks,

hamstrings and calves

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Pregnancy, back or neck injury

For someone who is more flexible, hold her ankle, step in between her legs, place your foot on her glutes, and lift her foot up to rest against your outside hip. Your foot on her glutes keeps her pelvis square and firmly anchored on the mat. Done in this way, the stretch targets the psoas and quadriceps muscles and protects her lower back. Be careful not to lift her pelvis off the mat, as this may stress her back.

Repeat this step on the other side.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Dhanurasana*

ENGLISH: Bow Pose

POINTS: Pull on ankles is very gentle to protect knees; inner thighs towards one another; tuck tailbone; spread collarbones and lift sternum

BENEFITS: Stretches spine, quadriceps, hip flexors, abdomen, shoulders, neck, and chest; strengthens legs, arms

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Pregnancy, back or neck injury, high or low blood pressure, headache

VARIATIONS: For More Flexible Clients



For a deeper stretch in the single-leg locust, you can involve the client's arm as well. The photo on the left shows a lift on the same-side arm, while the photo on the right shows a lift of the opposite-side arm.

With either variation, it is important that you rotate the client's shoulder to open the chest before lifting, as with all back bends. Also, ask your client to turn her head in the direction of the arm that is being lifted, but to leave it relaxed on the mat during the lift. Place your foot on her glutes, on the same side as the leg you are lifting, and lift gently up through her leg and arm simultaneously.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Natarajasana*

ENGLISH: Dancer Pose

POINTS: This is an advanced pose and is not recommended without the guidance of a teacher

BENEFITS: Stretches the chest, shoulders, quadriceps, hip flexors, abdomen, spine, and neck; strengthens the feet, ankles, and legs; energizes spine and nervous system

CONTRAINDICATIONS: High or low blood pressure; heart trouble; back, shoulder, neck or chest injury; headache, poor balance

Head, Neck, and Face Series

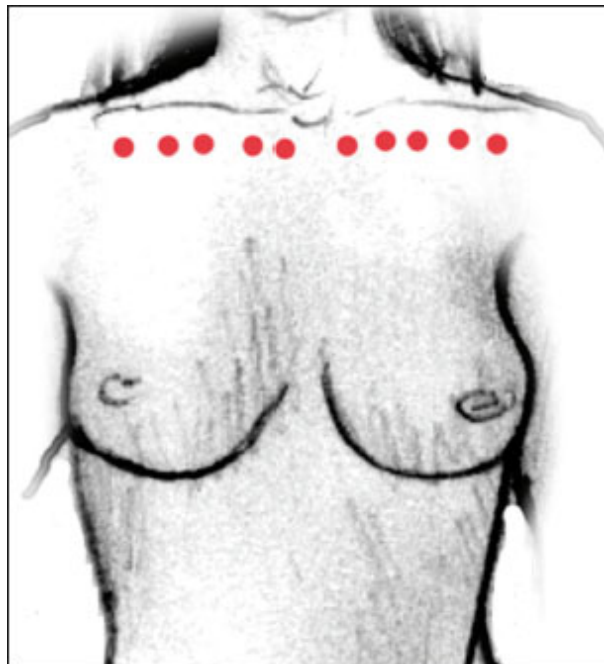
100. Thumb Press Under Clavicles

Ask the client to turn over onto her back again. You can replace the pillow behind her head or leave it out entirely. If you do return it behind her head, leave space to access her shoulders and neck. Sit cross-legged behind her so that you can work on the head and neck with the best body mechanics.

Following the basic principles introduced in Chapter 3, everything in this section will start at the lowest part of the body and work toward the top of the head. Note that this is the only time that you should be located above the client's head. As mentioned in Chapter 2, if you need to switch from one side of the client to the other when performing the classic routine, you should always walk around your client's feet instead of her head. The traditional reason for this is that you may disturb the client's pure energy emitting from her head. However, on a practical note, it is also a matter of safety since your client is on the floor. (It's one thing if you trip over your client's feet as you walk by, but imagine if you accidentally kicked her head during a massage!)



Our massage of the head, neck and face begins with thumb presses on the pectoral muscles following along the clavicles. Follow the collar bones from the shoulders in toward the sternum, and then back out again. Use straight arms and lean your bodyweight forward into the pad of your thumbs to maintain effective body mechanics.



101. Gently Stretch Neck by Pressing on Shoulders

Roll the client's head gently to the side. Expose the left side of the neck first for a female client or the right side for a male. Place your hand across the side of her head without adding any pressure. The stretch comes from pushing her shoulder away from her neck. Press the shoulder down into the mat and away from her ear.

Release the shoulder but continue to hold her head to the side. Gently use finger presses above the clavicles along the base of the neck muscles. Use a thumb on clients who enjoy more pressure. Follow the line of the clavicle laterally to medially. When you arrive at the midline, press gently into the sternoclavicular notch before moving back out laterally again.



Finish by finger-circling up the side of her neck to the base of the skull behind the ear. Be sure to cover both sides of the neck thoroughly, repeating several times if necessary.



102. Ear Massage

Gently roll the ear lobe in between your thumb and index finger. Massage the entire ear, giving it a little tug in all directions. There are numerous acupressure points here, so be sure to stimulate the whole ear.

Gently roll her head to the other side, keeping the head straight.

Repeat Steps **101-102** for the other side.



103. Finger Press Along Trapezius and Neck Gently roll the client's head back to a neutral position. Apply finger circles along the trapezius muscle,

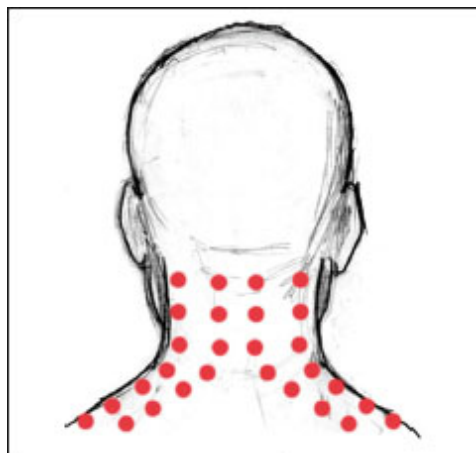
working from the shoulders, across the tops of the scapulas to the spine, and then up the back of the neck to the base of the skull.



Next, revisit the same area using finger presses. Insert your fingers under the client's body and press from below, using gravity to achieve the desired pressure with a minimum of effort. You can also apply stronger thumb pressure into the trapezius muscle and at the base of the neck for clients who are particularly stiff. Press both sides at the same time.



This step connects the back lines 1 and 2 with their continuation up the neck. For line 1, in the neck as in the back, press gently between each vertebra. Use a gentle lifting with your fingers as you move up the neck. Line 2 is an inch or so out to the sides. Follow from the outer edge of the trapezius up the back of the neck to the base of the skull.



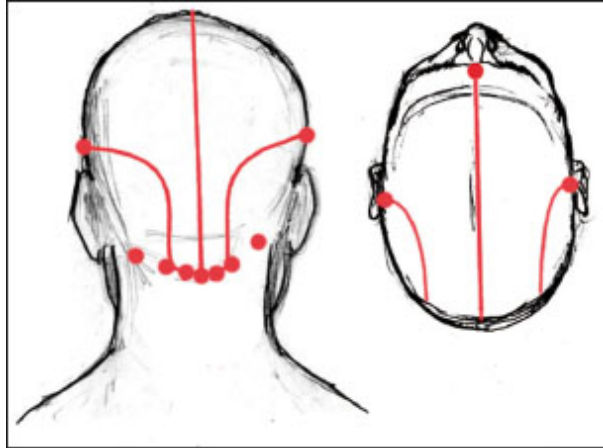
104. Base of Skull and Back of Head

At the base of the skull, hook your fingers into the points shown on the diagram below. Start laterally, and move toward the central point. Lean back and apply a little bit of pressure to the base of the skull by pulling toward you. You are providing stimulus to the acupuncture points while giving traction to the neck at the same time. Remember to use good body mechanics, leaning with bodyweight, not pulling with your arms.

Then, gently walk with finger presses or finger circles up the lines shown in the diagram from the base of the skull to the temples. Finish by finger-circling the temples.



Next, follow the middle line with finger and thumb presses from the base of the skull to the third eye, the point between the eyebrows. The client's head may roll gently from side to side as you walk your fingers up the back of the skull. You can stabilize with one hand if necessary. Finish by circling the third eye with your fingers.



105. Forehead and Chin Lines

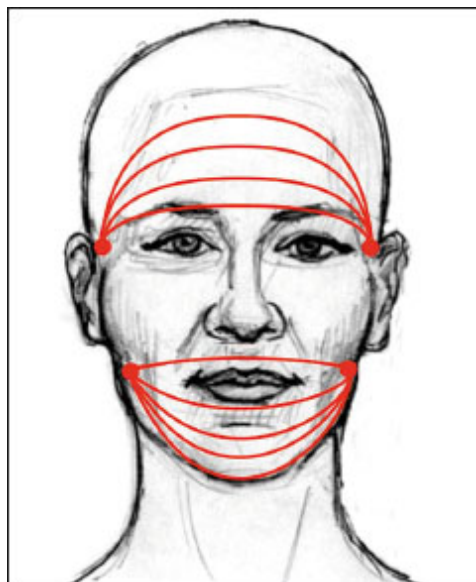
Follow the chin lines in the diagram below, moving from bottom to top. Begin in the center of the chin just under the jawbone, and glide your hands outward towards the ears. Finish just under the ears at the temporomandibular joint (TMJ) with finger circles.



Begin again at the midline, starting at the center of the chin, and repeat this motion. Repeat again, starting with your hands a half-inch or so farther up toward the mouth. Repeat until you have covered the entire area. Repeat one last time above the mouth below the nose.



Next, run your thumbs along the forehead lines. Begin at the place between the eyebrows, the third eye, and glide your thumbs along the eyebrows to the temples. Finish with gentle thumb circles on the temples. Move up a half-inch and begin again at the center. Keep repeating, each time moving up about a half-inch until you reach the hairline. Your last line should follow the hairline from the midline to the temples.



106. Scrub Scalp with “Shampooing” Motion

We have moved through the entire body from the feet to the head, and now we will finish the massage at the highest point on the body, the top of the head, or the crown. This is traditionally seen in Thailand as the most sacred part of the body, as it is believed that our connection to the *kwan* (“guardian spirit”) is via the top of our head. (For more information on the *kwan*, see the third book in this series, *Spiritual Healing of Traditional Thailand*.)

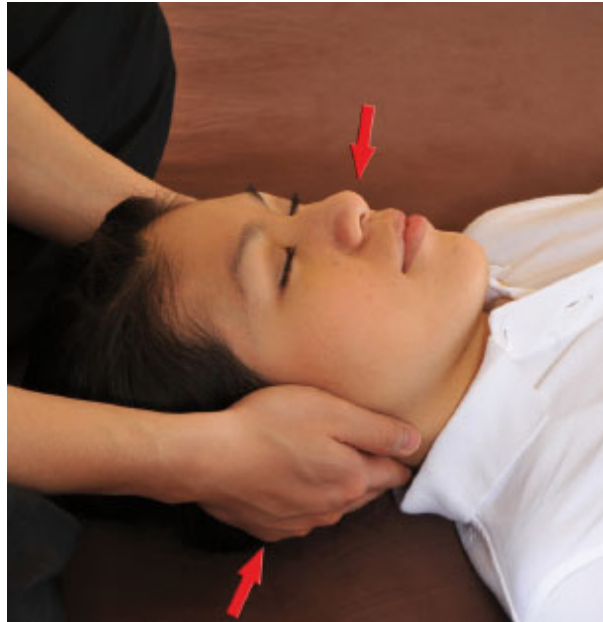
Use a scrubbing or “shampooing” motion all over the scalp. Turn the client’s head to the side in order to access the whole head. Visualize that, having brought the energy up through the *sen* throughout the course of the massage, you are now pulling out negativities through the crown.



107. Create a Vacuum with the Ears Next comes another cleansing visualization. Place your palms over the client’s ears, sealing them off. Create a vacuum by gently pressing inward toward the head (you may need to circle your hands a bit in order to make a tight seal).

As you hold the vacuum for about five deep breaths, visualize the vacuum drawing forth impurities and stagnant energy from throughout the body. Visualize these negativities rising up through the body toward the head, and collecting in the ears. Release the vacuum with a “pop,” and visualize this energy being released from the client.

While you do this visualization, your client will be shut out from external stimulus and may turn her attention within. She will hear only the sound of her own breathing, and perhaps her heartbeat. You can coach a regular client in performing the above visualization with you, for maximum benefit.



108. Finish with a Meditation of Thanksgiving and Healing

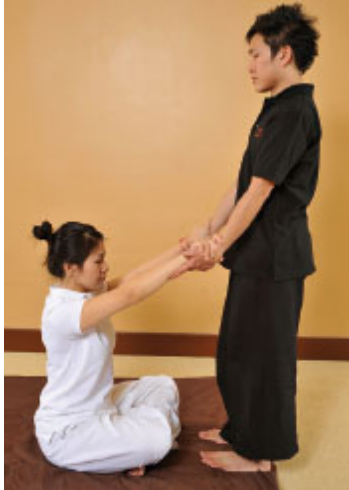
Place your hands in prayer position, and raise your thumbs up to your eyebrows. Now that you have emptied out the negative energy from the client's body, you will now take a moment to fill up your client with the beneficial vibrations of *metta* ("loving kindness"). Repeat mentally the phrases: "May you be happy. May you be well. May you be peaceful. May you be healed." (You may also use your own affirmations.)

Traditionally, this is also a moment of thanksgiving to the Father Doctor for being present and providing guidance and healing energies to therapist and client throughout the massage. The Thai Massage therapist also should thank the client for the opportunity to work with them by greeting her when she opens her eyes with the prayer-position hands at the heart and a slight bow. This gesture, known as the "wai," is shown in the photo above.



IMPORTANT: Don't omit this final part of the massage! This gift of *metta* is the most important step of all. Truth be told, the entire massage routine can be seen as an elaborate procedure to empty out and open up your clients' *sen* precisely to enable them to receive this gift of healing and blessings at the end. At the end of the massage, they are like dry sponges or empty vessels that will absorb the energies around them. Therefore, you want to be sure to fill them up with positive healthy affirmations before they leave your space and head out into the world outside.

Allow your client a few minutes in silence. As she slowly emerges from her relaxed state, you may wish to assist her up into the seated posture. Try these steps from the classic routine to help her get up and moving again:



Cross-Legged Pull-Up to Seated Position



Thai Chop on Back

Be sure not to rush through the final steps of the massage to allow the client to transition smoothly from her state of relaxation back into the “real world.” Maintain your concentration and focus until you both have left the massage area.



CHAPTER 5

Variations and Advanced Steps

This chapter will present some variations and advanced steps you may wish to incorporate into your classic routine once you are familiar with the 108 steps introduced in Chapter 4. Use these steps as you see fit, keeping in mind your clients' limitations.

As mentioned previously in this book, be sure to seek proper training and instruction from a qualified teacher prior to attempting any bodywork. This book alone is not sufficient to be able to safely provide a Thai Massage, especially those poses in this section. (For advice on choosing a school, see the Appendix.)

Variations for Side Position

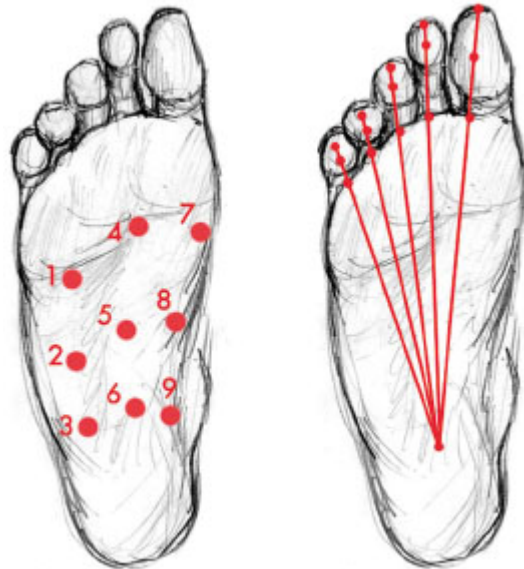
IF YOU WISH, you may substitute the side position variation in place of the Back Series in your classic Thai Massage. You would typically use the side position for clients who are not comfortable lying on the front due to whatever reason (for example, pregnancy, obesity, difficulty with sinuses, or large breasts). You can also use this section in addition to your classic routine for a more thorough massage in excess of two hours. This routine also will play a role in the therapeutic massage introduced in Chapter 8, so you may wish to familiarize yourself with it before continuing.

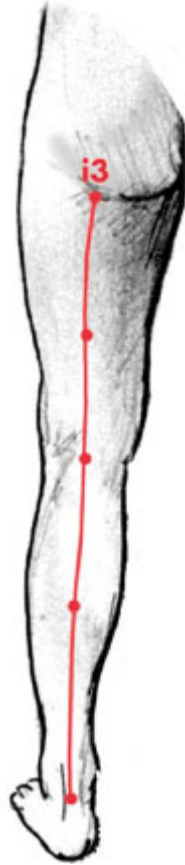
The routine should be performed in the order presented, from beginning to end, as a substitute for the classic routine Steps number 78 to 99. Your client should then turn over and you should repeat the same steps for the other side of the body. Remember to start on the left side for a female client and the right side for a male client. Since you should already be familiar with the classic routine, detailed instructions will not be given in this section;

however, to keep you oriented, I will make numerical references to the classic routine. Refer to Chapter 4 for more information on each step.

For all of the steps in this section, the client is lying on her side, with her bottom leg straight and her top leg bent. A pillow or bolster under the bent leg may help to keep her sacrum perpendicular to the mat, which is desirable. Also, be sure that her shoulders are straight and that she has adequate support under her head to keep her neck straight.

1. Foot Points and Leg lines





As with the classic routine for the back, you begin this section by pressing the foot points on the client's bent leg foot with palm presses and thumb presses.

From the foot, proceed with walking palm presses up her bent leg to the hip and then back down. Apply thumb presses along line **i3**, walking from the foot to the hip and back down. Finish by repeating the palm presses.



The A-B-C-B-A routine from Steps 78-82 does not strictly apply in this section, as it's impossible to apply the stretch to a bent leg. Instead, simply do the palm presses, thumb presses, and then palm presses again (B-C-B).

(Compare to Steps 78-82.)



2. “Paddleboat”

Keeping the client’s leg at a 90° angle, walk along line **i3** with your feet, pressing into the back of her thigh along the hamstring from the knee to the hip and back. While this step is very similar to Step **19** in the classic routine, you’ll notice you are massaging a different area of the hamstrings from this new position. (Compare to Step **19**.)

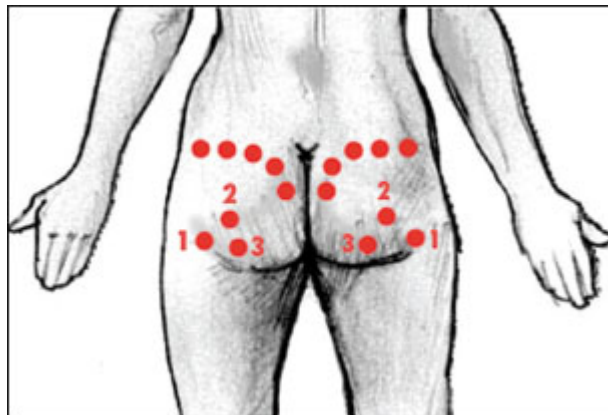
3. Finger Press



Use your shin to keep the client's leg in the “figure 4” position while your feet press against the center of her hamstring. Reach out in front of you and pull along line **i1**. Apply pressure by leaning your bodyweight back with straight arms. Work from the knee to the hip and back.

(Compare to Step 20.)

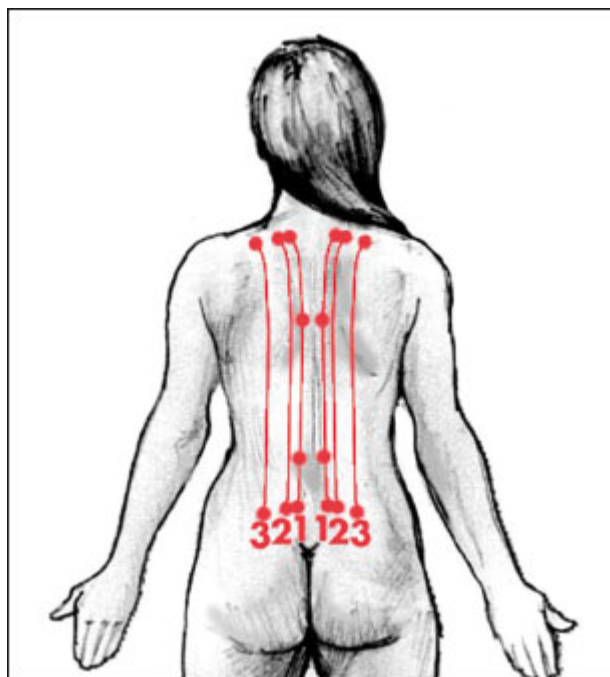
4. Hip Points



Press the points around the femur and below the iliac crest with thumb presses—or, if your client prefers deep pressure, with elbow presses. Thumb press or thumb circle the sacrum and gluteal muscles, as well.

(Compare to Steps 88-90.)

5. Back Lines

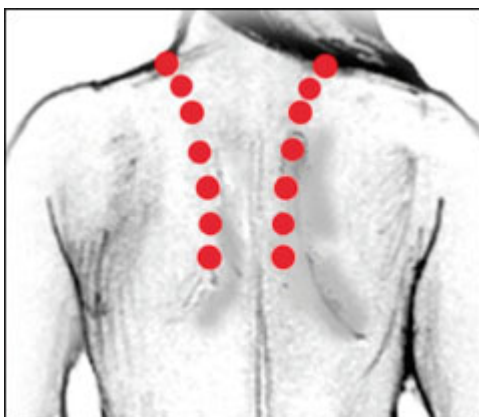


Begin the A-B-C-B-A pattern by placing one of your hands on the client's lower back and the other hand on her scapula, stretching her back. Next, palm press from the iliac crest to the scapula and back. Then, trace along the three back lines with thumb presses. Finish the A-B-C-B-A pattern by repeating the palm press and stretch. Palm Circle the rib cage and pull on the trapezius, as in Steps 94 and 95.

NOTE: We will be working on only one side of the back for this step.
(Compare to Steps 91-95.)

6. Shoulder Mobilization





Bring your client's hand behind her back. Position your hands as shown in the photo, cupping the front of her shoulder. Simultaneously pull her shoulder up to her ear and toward you, while pressing with a bladed hand behind and under the scapula into the rhomboids.

From this position, you can also press behind the scapula with thumb presses.

(Compare to Steps 96-97.)

7. Triceps Stretch

Place the client's palm flat on the mat behind her ear so that her fingers are pointing toward her shoulder. Position your body parallel to your client, with one hand on her triceps near her elbow and the other on her hip, your fingers pointing outward in a butterfly position. Lean forward, and press the elbow toward the ground. Release the stretch, then palm press her triceps from her elbow to the shoulder and back again. From this position, thumb press along line 01 from the elbow to the shoulder and back again. Finish with another palm press and stretch (A-B-C-B-A).

(Compare to Step 48.)



8. Rotate Shoulder and Pull Arm

Holding her wrist or hand with one of your hands, and stabilizing her shoulder with the other hand, rotate her arm five times clockwise and five times counterclockwise.

Next, with her palm facing downward, pull her arm in all directions, toward her feet, straight up, and over her head.

(Compare to Steps **45, 46.**)



9. Arm Cross-Pull

Cross the client's arm over her body just in front of her chin. Take her opposite arm under her crossed arm, and pull up to give a cross-stretch to her upper body, neck, and shoulder. Be sure you place the nonactive arm between the stretching arm and the neck, so as not to constrict the client's throat.

Position your body directly behind hers, so that you can use your legs to maintain a straight back and shoulders for your client. You should apply enough of a stretch to provide a stretch for her arm and shoulder; however, do not lift your client off the mat or twist the spine.

(Compare to Step 47.)



10. Basic Back Stretch

Hook your forearm under the client's arm. Cup your hand over the front of her shoulder and place the forearm of the same arm across her midsection. Be careful not to jab your elbow into her lower back. Simultaneously press into your forearm forward while pulling back with your hand. This will provide a nice stretch for the back while preserving the opening in the shoulders that we look for with all back bends. Use your other hand to support and stabilize the stretch as need. Repeat three times with her exhalations.



11. Locust Variations



Support the client's leg on your forearm, and hold just above her knee. Leaning your body-weight backward, bring her leg with you while palm pressing into her gluteal muscles. This will stretch the quadriceps and psoas muscles of the active leg.



If you find it more beneficial for your body mechanics, this same stretch can be achieved by using your knee in her glutes instead of your hand. This allows an additional hand to support her leg.

In all cases, use straight arms and use your bodyweight to achieve the stretch. Be sure not to use too much pressure on the kidneys, rib cage, or other sensitive body parts.

(Compare to Step 99.)

VARIATIONS: **For More Flexible Clients**



With a client who is a bit more flexible, there are two other options for performing this stretch. In this photo, the practitioner is using a foot to

apply pressure to the client's glutealm muscles, rolling her torso away, while holding her ankle and leaning back. This is a more intense version of the quadriceps/psoas stretch.



In the second photo, the practitioner is engaging the back and shoulder muscles more by holding onto the client's wrist or forearm while performing the same stretch. If you use this variation, be sure to open the client's shoulder, as you do with all back bends, by rolling the shoulder back with the palm facing to the ceiling.

Variations for Seated Position

The seated-position variations can be inserted either as a unit or individually into the classical routine at any point where the client is brought to a seated position. This can be done in the course of a two- or three-hour massage in order to extend the time, or it may be used as an alternative for clients who, for whatever reason, are not able to lie comfortably on the ground.

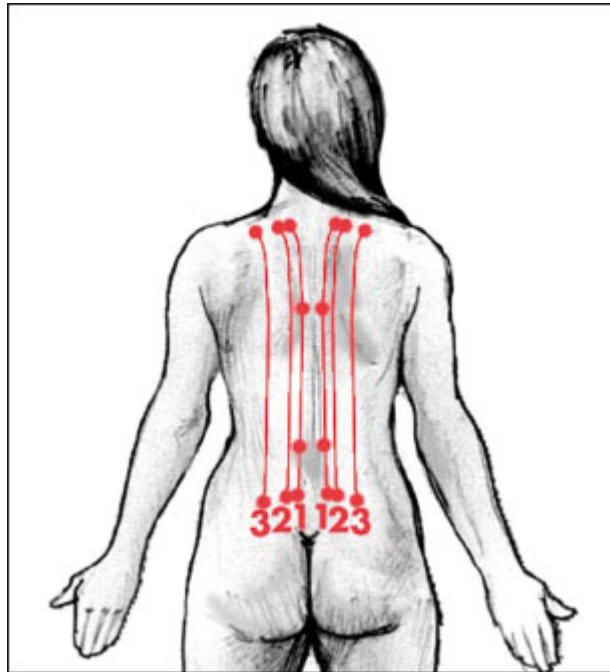


(For example, clients with severe respiratory diseases or spastic diaphragms may prefer to remain seated throughout the massage). You may also find that these variations work well for chair massage. This series would make a great 15-20-minute demo massage for a client seated on an office chair or massage chair.

1. Thumb Press Back Lines

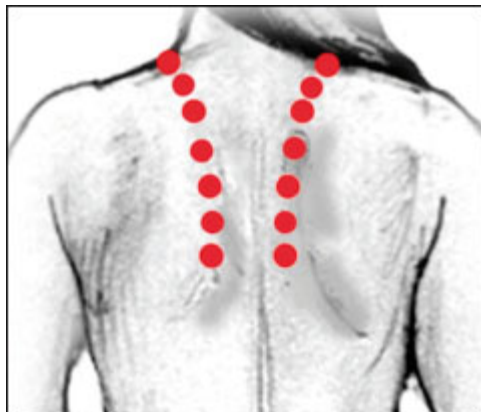
Begin by palm pressing along either side of the client's spine. Then, thumb press along all six back lines (three on either side). Finish by palm pressing again. Remember to always work from the lower back to the trapezius and back down.

(Compare to Steps 91-94.)



2. Scapula Mobilization

The scapula routine can be effectively performed from this position. Place her arm behind her back with the palm facing out. Reach through the opening made by the bend in her arm, and cup the front of the shoulder. You may want to use light pressure with your knee to hold her hand against her back. Place your bladed hand against the rhomboids, and with your other hand rotate the client's shoulder up in the direction of her ear and back toward you. Finish with thumb presses behind the scapula directly on the muscle.



(Compare to Steps 96-97.)

3. Triceps Routine

Place the client's hand on the back of her neck. Holding this hand in place, use the other hand to bring her elbow back and up over her head, stretching the triceps muscles.

Next, thumb press along line **o1** from her shoulder to her elbow and back again.

(Compare to Step 48.)





VARIATION: **For Clients Who Enjoy More Pressure**



For a client who enjoys more pressure, place your elbow on her trapezius muscle, and grip her wrist or hand. Pull her hand toward her opposite

shoulder to stretch the triceps muscles, while pressing your elbow into the trapezius muscle. This is a great combination of pressure and stretching.



For additional support and a deeper stretch, you can also switch your hands so that you can lift the elbow, while pressing down into the trapezius muscle with your opposite elbow and guiding her hand toward her other shoulder.

4. Rotate and Pull Arm

Holding the client's wrist or hand in one of your hands and stabilizing her shoulder with the other, rotate her arm both clockwise and counterclockwise, five times in each direction. Then, pull the arm upward, to the side, and to the front.

(Compare to Step 45-46.)





5. Thumb Press Trapezius

Use bodyweight to thumb press or Elbow Press down onto the trapezius muscles from above. Start on the outer edge of the trapezius. Move medially toward the neck and back out.

(Compare to Step 103.)

6. Trapezius and Neck Stretch

In this step, you use your forearms to press the trapezius and shoulder down while pressing the neck to the side.

Place one of your forearms across the tra-pezius and the other across the side of the head just above the client's ear. Applying a bit of pressure, spread your arms away from each other, taking the client's head to the opposite side. Be careful not to overdo it. Repeat this a few times, angling the head slightly differently each time.

IMPORTANT: Be sure always to press very gently when working with the neck.

(Compare to Step **101**.)



7. Side and Neck Stretch

Place one of the client's hands on the side of her head, just above the ear. Place your hand under her arm by the elbow. Lift the elbow up toward her head and the opposite side shoulder. Use your other hand and leg from the bent knee stance to stabilize the body so that her torso is kept erect with no strain on the spine.

The client will feel this stretch through the neck and the side of the torso.

IMPORTANT: Be sure always to be sensitive to the client's abilities and limitations, especially when working with the neck. Always move slowly and gently when performing this step.

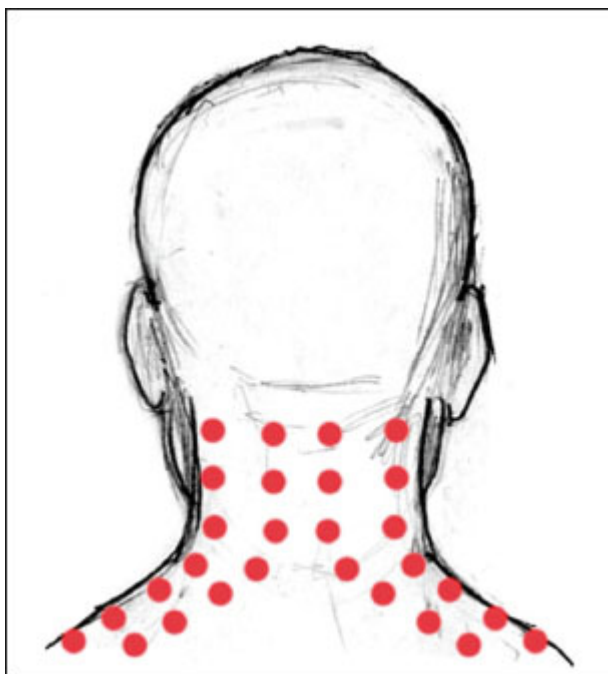


8. Thumb Press Neck Points

Using thumb presses, follow the points shown in the first diagram at top right. Follow both lines from the trapezius to the base of the skull.

Placing your thumb and index finger on the client's forehead as shown in the photo below, you can assure that her head remains erect and her neck straight while applying this pressure.

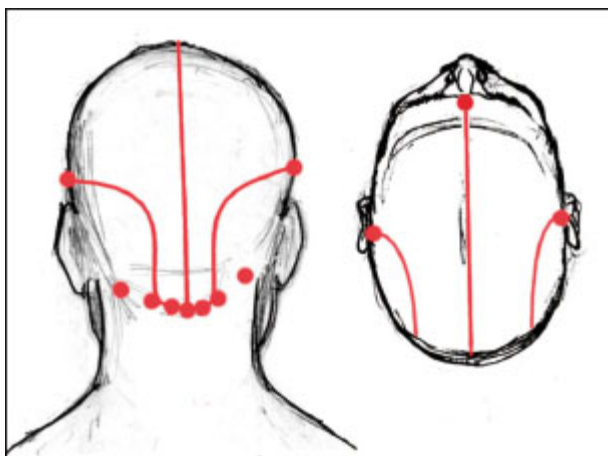




Next, press upward along the base of the skull | points shown in the second diagram below.

Finish by following the three head lines from | the base of the skull to the temples and the | third eye.

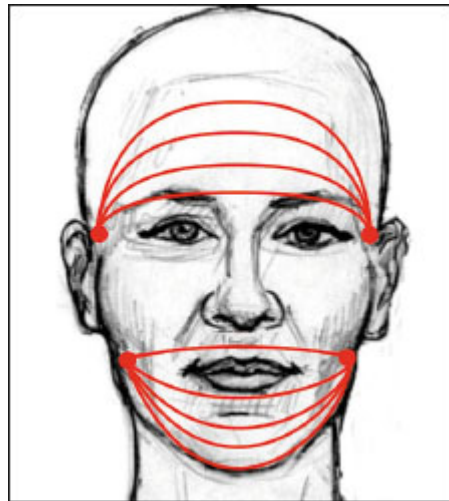
(Compare to Steps **103-104.**)





9. Face Massage

Rest the client's head against your chest. Perform the face routine as detailed in Step 105. Next, "shampoo" the scalp as described in Step 106. Finish by vacuuming the ears as in Step 107. (Compare to Steps 105-107.)



Advanced Postures



After having finished reviewing the classic routine introduced in the Chapter 4, you may feel that Thai Massage is a modality that is not for everyone. Certainly, there are clients who would be better off not receiving some of the more complicated full-body stretches. These clients may prefer you to concentrate on *sen* work (see Chapter 6), therapeutic routines (see Chapter 8), or herbal massage (see Chapter 9).

By the same token, you will also find clients who greatly enjoy the stretching postures, and who are ready for even more in-depth work than the classic steps. For those clients, you may wish to consider adding some of these more advanced moves.

The advanced techniques introduced in this section focus mainly on the back but involve the entire body and all of the *sen* simultaneously. They should be inserted into the classic routine in the appropriate place, during the full-body stretches section (or for the Full Locust, during the Back Section). Keep in mind, even with clients who prefer deep work and intense stretching, you should always warm them up with the classical routine steps such as thumb presses, joint mobilization, and lighter full-body stretching before attempting these advanced steps.

Lastly, I should emphasize that, although Thai Massage has become famous for its elaborate postures, these sorts of steps are the least important aspect of the therapeutic bodywork. Concentrating on perfecting these stretches may be good for marketing brochures and promotional photographs, but your primary goal should be to perfect the techniques of *sen* work, joint mobilization, and stretching in the classic routine, as these are the most important tools in the Thai Massage therapist's repertoire, if you are interested in benefitting your client.

IMPORTANT: These advanced poses should never be performed by a therapist without adequate training and practice. These steps can potentially lead to injury for the client and/ or the therapist when performed incorrectly. Proper understanding of alignment and body mechanics is essential at this level, and advanced training with a qualified instructor is highly recommended before attempting these steps. (See advice on where to study Thai Massage in the Appendix.)

1. Advanced Back Stretch

This is a full back bend for more flexible clients only.

Begin by kneeling behind the client, and placing your knees just below her scapula. Use a pillow or other cushion for padding.

Cross the client's arms in front of her, and take hold of her wrists.



In one controlled and steady movement, draw her toward you to begin to arch her back over your knees. It may take several attempts to find the right amount of bodyweight to put into this manoeuver. If you want, rock back and forth several times until you get the feel for it. Each client will be different depending on size and flexibility. (If you realize you will not be able to do this step—particularly if you are working with clients who are much heavier than you—you should end the step here.)

Once the client's back is beginning to arch over your knees, release her arms down to her side. Move your hands so you are holding her shoulders by reaching through her arms and under her armpits. Place the palm of your hand on the front of her shoulders. Lean back onto your heels and sit on the ground, bringing your client's pelvis off the mat.



Let the momentum of your bodyweight continue to bring you down to the mat and to raise the client into a full back stretch over your knees. At the final point, you should be completely relaxed, with your back fully rested on the ground. Your knees should rest in the middle of the client's back, below the scapula. From this position, you can adjust the level of intensity of the stretch by raising or lowering your knees.



Bring the client's arms above her head. For an extra stretch, you can pull slightly on her arms individually, or both at the same time. You could also hold her head and gently pull it towards you to give traction to her spine, or roll her head to one side and then the other for a gentle neck stretch.



Hold her in place over five breaths. To release the posture, hold under the client's armpits or shoulders. Simultaneously straighten your legs, allowing her pelvis to be lowered, and push forward with straight arms, lifting her back up into the seated position.

You should end in the same position in which you began. Relax the back with Thai chops.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Urdhva Dhanurasana*

ENGLISH: Upward Bow Pose

POINTS: This is an advanced pose. Outer edges of feet parallel, place hands so fingers point towards shoulders and elbows point towards ceiling; lift evenly using hands and feet, tucking tailbone and lifting sternum to open chest

BENEFITS: Stretches spine, quadriceps, hip flexors, abdomen, shoulders, neck, and chest; strengthens legs, arms and wrists

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Back or neck injury, weak upper body, high or low blood pressure, headache

2. Bridge Pose

This is another wonderful back stretch, although it may be a bit harder to perform than the last one. You should practice with a teacher's guidance before attempting it on clients.





Start by bringing your client's legs together and lifting her up, as if you were beginning the Plow (Step **65**).

When her hips are raised off the mat, place your knees on her gluteal muscles just below her iliac crest.



Bend your client's knees, and place her feet on the front pockets of your pants. Place your hands across her quadricep muscles so that they rest just below the knees.



With straight arms, sit down while continuing to hold onto her legs. Her hips should raise off the ground as shown in either of the photos here. Move

slow so that your momentum does not thrust your client forward. Hold this pose for five deep breaths.



With more flexible clients, you can remove her feet from your hip sockets and place them flat on the ground for the full bridge pose. Be sure to keep hold of her ankles to help stabilize her body. The top of her head should be flat on the mat and her body arched over your knees. Adjust the intensity by raising or lowering your knees.





To exit the pose safely, hold onto her legs and come up onto your elbows. Dig in your elbows and heels, and push your rear end away. This will return her neck and shoulders back to the mat safely. Then, straighten your legs, using your feet to press against her inner arms. Glide her back onto the mat by pushing her away from you while holding her feet.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Setu Bandha Sarvangasana*

ENGLISH: Bridge Pose

POINTS: Back of head remains on floor; outer edges of feet parallel; neck long; lift pelvis; tuck tailbone; lift sternum

BENEFITS: Stretches spine, chest, and neck; improves digestion; relieves asthma and sinus problems; relieves menstrual discomfort, mild backache, headache, insomnia; alleviates anxiety, stress and depression by calming nervous system

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Neck injury, shoulder injury



3. Shoulder Stand

Step in close to your client's body, bending her knees into her chest. Bending as necessary, place the client's feet on your knees.

Place your hands across the front of her quadriceps muscles and hold her legs firmly together for support. With straight arms, sit back, pulling her pelvis off the ground. Lift the client up onto her shoulders, and hold this position for five deep breaths.



To release, sit all the way down, then straighten your legs. As you sit, your feet should connect with her inner arm and push her body away from you. Spread your legs and allow her to come to the ground.



Correlations with Yoga



SANSKRIT: *Salamba Sarvangasana*

ENGLISH: Supported Shoulder Stand

POINTS: This is an advanced pose. Most easily approached from Halasana (Plow Pose). From Halasana, place hands next to spine with fingertips pointing up. Keep chest open as you lift legs.

BENEFITS: Stretches neck and shoulders; strengthens legs and back; improves asthma and sinusitis; alleviates stress, mild depression, fatigue and insomnia by balancing nervous system; stimulates thyroid, thymus, and prostate glands

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Heart problems, pregnancy (if not part of regular practice), menstruation, high blood pressure, neck or spine injury, headache, diarrhea



4. Full Locust

This is an intense back stretch for the most flexible clients only. Be sure your client has a stable body position with support for her head and neck, while her shoulders are flat on the mat. Begin by placing both of the client's legs together on the mat, and holding onto the ankles. Keep your center of gravity low and your elbows tucked in.

Now, lift the client's legs straight up into the air while slowly walking forward. Always maintain an upward lifting motion to support your client and to avoid compressing the neck.

Hold this posture for five deep breaths.



IMPORTANT: Be very careful in this position that your client's lower back and neck are not compressed. You can keep the pillow in its place under her chest in order to avoid strain. Under no circumstances should the client move her head or neck while in this position. Notice that in these pictures, we are using a face cradle and extra support from a bolster to provide the proper support and maintain a safe position for the client's neck.

To come out of the posture, step backward, gently lowering her legs back to the mat while maintaining control and lift in her legs during the entire exit. It is critical that you provide the client with adequate lift throughout this step until the client's knees are firmly back on the mat. If you do not continually lift her legs up toward the ceiling (even while lowering her down), her back may collapse, and her lumbar vertebrae may be pinched, potentially causing serious injury. If you lack the strength to lift your client getting in and out of this pose, do not attempt this step.



Correlations with Yoga

SANSKRIT: *Salabhasana*

ENGLISH: Full Locust Pose

POINTS: This is an advanced pose and is not recommended without the guidance of a teacher.

BENEFITS: Stretches the chest, shoulders, quadriceps, hip flexors, abdomen, spine, and neck; strengthens arms, legs, and spine; energizes spine and nervous system

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Pregnancy; heart trouble; high or low blood pressure; spine, neck or shoulder injury

Walking Massage

For clients who enjoy deep work, you can use the knee press, foot press, or heel press to work the *sen* or acupressure points throughout the body.

On the next few pages, I will introduce the technique of walking on the client's back, which is the most intense of the methods of applying pressure, and which should only be attempted with certain clients who enjoy a truly deep massage.

In Thailand, many practitioners have a rope suspended from the ceiling that is used for stabilizing the therapist during the back walking. The therapist hangs from the rope for balance, while applying full bodyweight to the client.



In practice, this type of set-up is not always possible in the modern Western massage clinic. A great alternative is to use a chair, stool, walker, or other small piece of furniture for support. With practice, you may find that you are able to perform these techniques with no support at all, but you should reserve attempting this until you are fully competent with the steps outlined here so as not to slip and injure your client.

IMPORTANT: For all of the steps in this section, never press directly on the spine! Never press the back in a jerky, quick way. Always use firm, steady application of pressure. Don't be surprised if the vertebrae crack during this step, but don't make this your goal.



1. Walking Frog

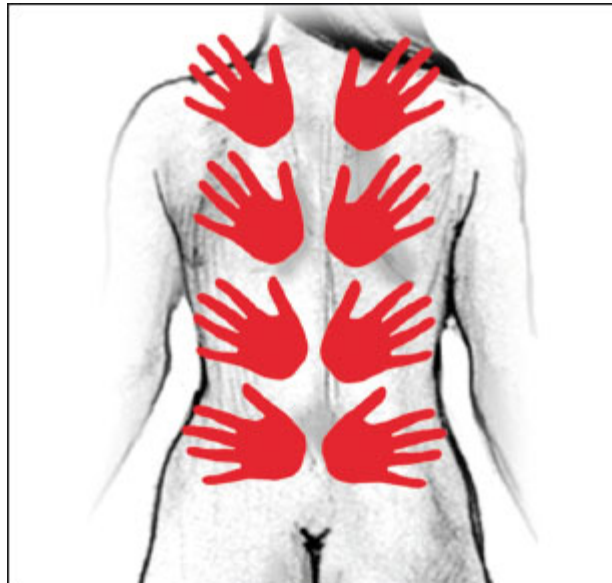
To begin, stand on your client, placing one foot just above her knee with your toes pointing out. Wrap and tuck her foot against your leg. Place a hand on your client's sacrum for balance, then wrap and tuck the other foot into your opposite side leg.

The back of the thighs can typically take a lot of pressure, and you probably won't hurt your client by applying your full bodyweight. However, if at this point your client feels pain, suspend further back-walking steps and go back to thumb, palm, and elbow pressure.



Next, reach out to palm press her back with hands in the butterfly position, while straightening out your legs. Palm Press up and down the back while keeping your shoulders over your hands. As you move your hips forward, added weight will be applied to your hands and she will receive a deep stretch in the quadriceps muscles and the front of her shins in addition to the back massage.

Remember always to start from the lower back and work upward, placing a palm on either side of her spine. Move your hands up a palm-width, and press again. Press all the way up to the top of the scapula, being sure not to press directly on bone, and then work your way back down. You can walk your hands up and down the back, or, for more pressure, press simultaneously with both hands.



2. Walking on the Back with One Foot

Keeping one of your feet stationary on the client's hamstring insertion, place your other foot on the client's gluteal muscles. Shift your weight fully into this foot, pressing down evenly through your foot while the client exhales. Shifting back into your stationary foot, release the pressure while your client inhales.



Now, move your pressing foot up to her lower back. Shifting your weight, apply another press. Repeating these motions, move your foot up the side of her spine, making sure you always press on muscle rather than bone.

Do not press higher than her scapula, as this compromises the neck. Also, note how in the diagram, the positioning of your pressing foot changes with the contour of her back. With the press to the glutes, your foot is rotated outward to cover the entire buttock. However, with the presses on her back, your toes are pointed forward to apply weight evenly along the back muscles, and not directly on the rib cage.

If your client wants even more pressure than the foot press, you can repeat these steps with a heel press. (You will find it harder keep your balance as you perform the heel presses, so don't attempt them until you feel steady!)





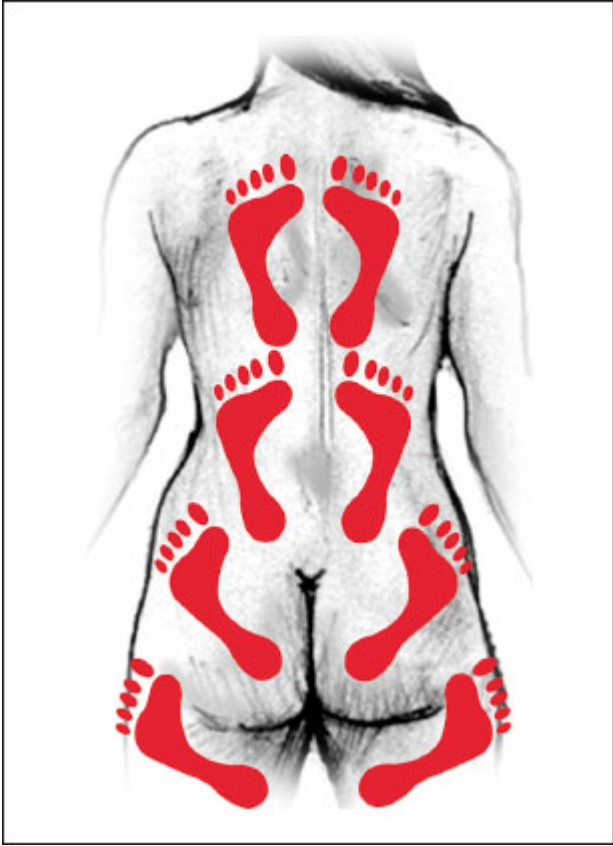
3. Walking on the Back with Two Feet

When you have applied foot presses with one foot, try foot presses with both feet. Walk up on either side of the spine, as shown in the diagram to the left. Walk very slowly and deliberately, applying your weight in an even, controlled, and balanced manner. Remember to walk in synchronization with the client's breathing and to adjust your bodyweight based on the amount of pressure you would like to deliver to your client's body.

With either one foot or two feet you can also walk up and down the hamstrings. You can also use the ball of the foot or heels to press the trapezius, rhomboids, arms, feet, and/or hands. Some Thai Massage therapists cover a significant amount of the body by using their feet. Experiment and have fun, but always respect your client's tolerance for pressure.

IMPORTANT: Be sure never to step on the spine, and never to step higher than the top of the scapula to protect the neck! With your full bodyweight

directly on her back, this is the maximum amount of pressure you can apply to a client. Always be mindful of her comfort.



Part 3

Thai Massage as a Therapeutic Practice



CHAPTER 6

Sen: The Thai Energy Lines



What are the Sen?

Although at first glance there seems to be some similarity between the Thai *sen* and the Chinese meridians, they are in fact quite different systems. The *sen*, for example, do not correlate with any organ systems the way that the Chinese meridians do. The Thai *sen* all begin at the navel, and end at the orifices or extremities of the body. Also, rather than corresponding to certain organ functions, each *sen* may be used to treat any and all body parts through which it passes along its course.

THE THAI *SEN* also share many similarities with the Indian *nadis*, and some even share the same Sanskrit names. For example, the *Sen Sumana*, *Sen Itha*, and *Sen Pingala* of the Thai tradition relate to the *Sushumna Nadi*, *Ida Nadi*, and *Pingala Nadi* of the yoga tradition. Many of the acupressure points used in Thai Massage also are identical to the Indian *marma* points.⁶ Even if they are historically related, however, these traditions are not interchangeable, and the Thai *sen* must be learned on their own terms.

Thai texts mention red, black, and white *sen*, which correlate roughly with arteries, veins, and nerves. However, the main *sen* used in Thai Massage seem to correlate most closely with networks of myofascial tissue (what structural integrationists call “anatomy trains”).⁷ The lines for the most part follow the grooves in between muscles, connecting important insertion points to one another. However, the same lines also take sudden turns into the body and are often difficult to follow without experience.

Because of differences between medical knowledge in different regions of Thailand, there are many inconsistencies in the *sen* taught at schools across Thailand. Western books on Thai Massage traditions also differ in their description of the *sen*. Looking at three different books will often lead to three different maps of the *sen* that directly contradict one another. This is simply because these writers have studied at different schools.

You may also notice differences in spelling the *sen* from one book to the next. This is due to the fact that there are many methods of writing the Thai language with the Roman alphabet. Even as common a word as “hello” has been written in many different ways, including for example, *sawadi*, *sawatdee*, and *sawasdee*. In transliterating Thai, it is common to interchange G with K, L with R, and D with T. So, don’t be surprised if you see *Kalatharee* spelled as *Galadhari*, or if you see *Itha* as *Eeda* or *Idha*.

A further confusion has been the tendency on the part of some authors to freely combine different Asian traditions. Because there are some similarities, many Western teachers of Thai Massage have confused aspects of Thai Massage with Indian or Chinese traditions. While such comparisons may sometimes be useful to show the common ground among these medical traditions, actually intermixing these traditions in practice is usually the result of a lack of knowledge about Thai Massage tradition. It cannot be stated emphatically enough that Thai Massage and Traditional Thai Medicine are not the same as Ayurveda or Yoga or Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)!

In Chapters 4 and 5, correlations with yoga are pointed out when such comparisons may be helpful to the beginning practitioner, but throughout the book, the Thai Massage system is introduced on its own merits. The descriptions of the 10 basic *sen* in this book reflect the teachings of the Shivagakomarpaj Lineage.

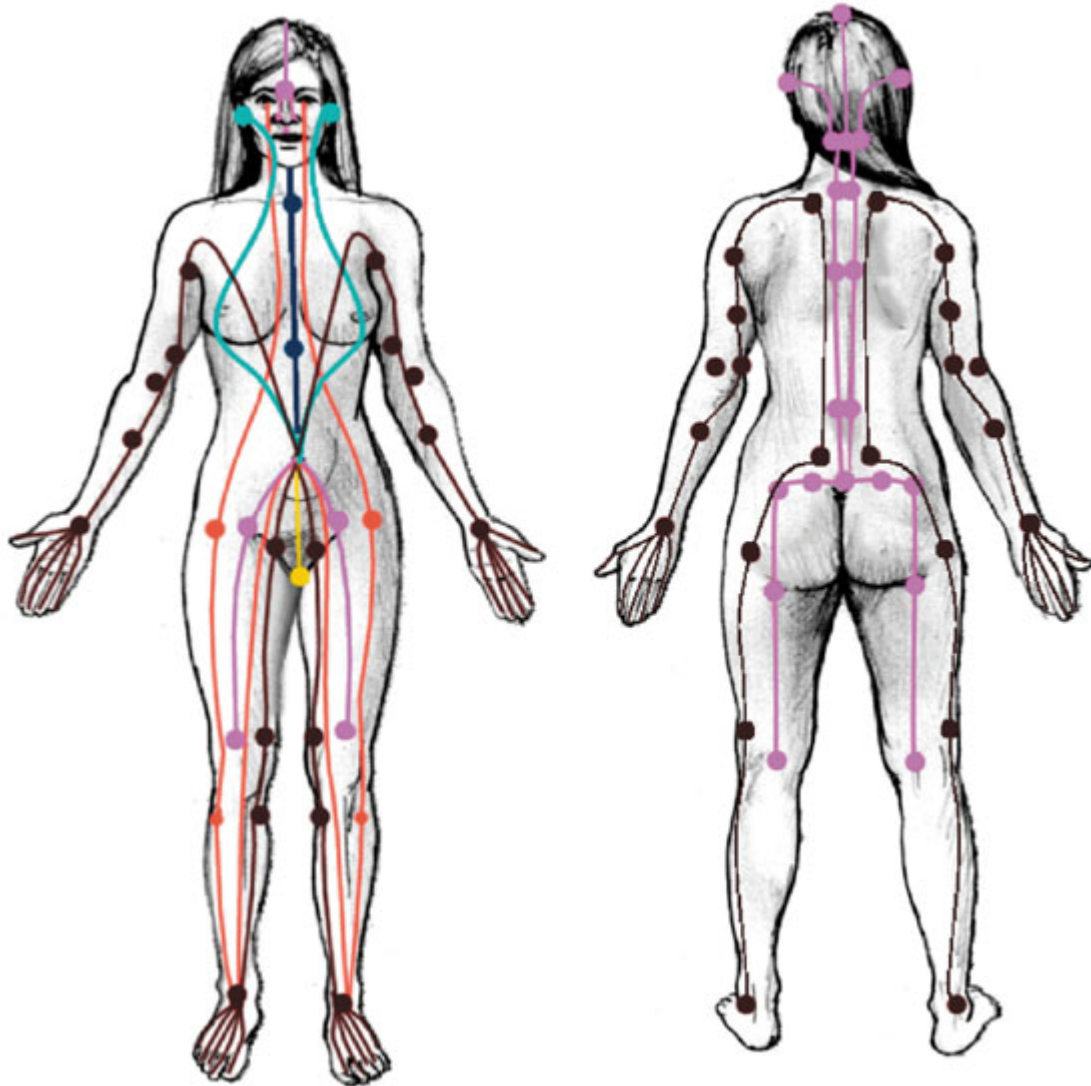
Under normal, healthy circumstances, the body’s energy (or *lom*) flows uninhibited throughout the 72,000 *sen* and is distributed according to the body’s needs and activities. Problems arise in the body when these *sen* are either blocked or broken, causing an energy imbalance (see Chapter 7).

Blockages and breaks are caused by a variety of factors including sprains, muscle strains, injuries, and repetitive stress. Parts of the body that are serviced by the *sen* can become affected by these energy imbalances and cease to function optimally.

The goal of Thai Massage is to correct these energy imbalances by working directly with the *sen* to restore the body's vigor and vitality. Massage on a regular basis promotes healthy and strong *sen*, which fosters improved health and mental well-being. When a blockage or break occurs, therapeutic massage concentrates on restoring the body's normal function through stimulation of the affected *sen*.

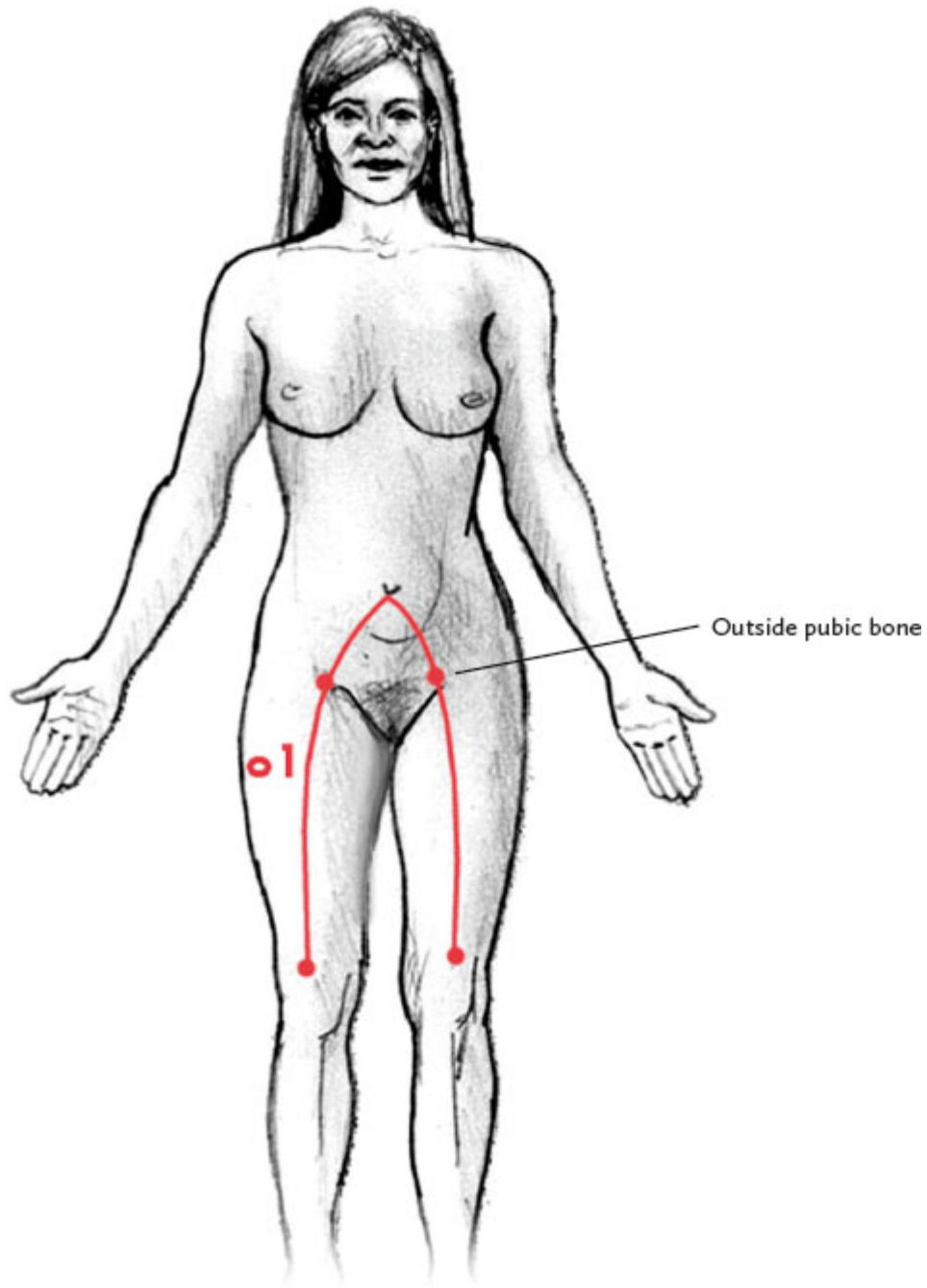
For everyday Thai Massage, it is helpful to view the body in terms of its individual parts rather than trace the entire course of each *sen*. During a classic Thai Massage routine, the practitioner moves throughout the body fully massaging each part before starting with the next. In this type of massage, the *sen* are not treated as individual wholes, but are massaged piecemeal as they are encountered. Thus, when the practitioner treats the legs of a client, all *sen* segments in the legs are massaged, and when the arms are treated, all *sen* segments in the arms are massaged. In this way, the client is assured of a complete body massage. Although they will not be treated individually, all the main *sen* will be massaged in due course.

On a theoretical level, however, it is important for the Thai Massage therapist to understand each *sen* as an integrated system in and of itself, an energy pathway connecting important acupressure points that enable the practitioner to manipulate the energy flow to certain limbs and organs. During a therapy routine, the practitioner will concentrate on an individual *sen* and follow it on its course through the body. The diagrams beginning on the next page show the 10 main *sen* utilized in Thai Massage therapy routines.



The 10 major Thai *sen*

Sen Charts



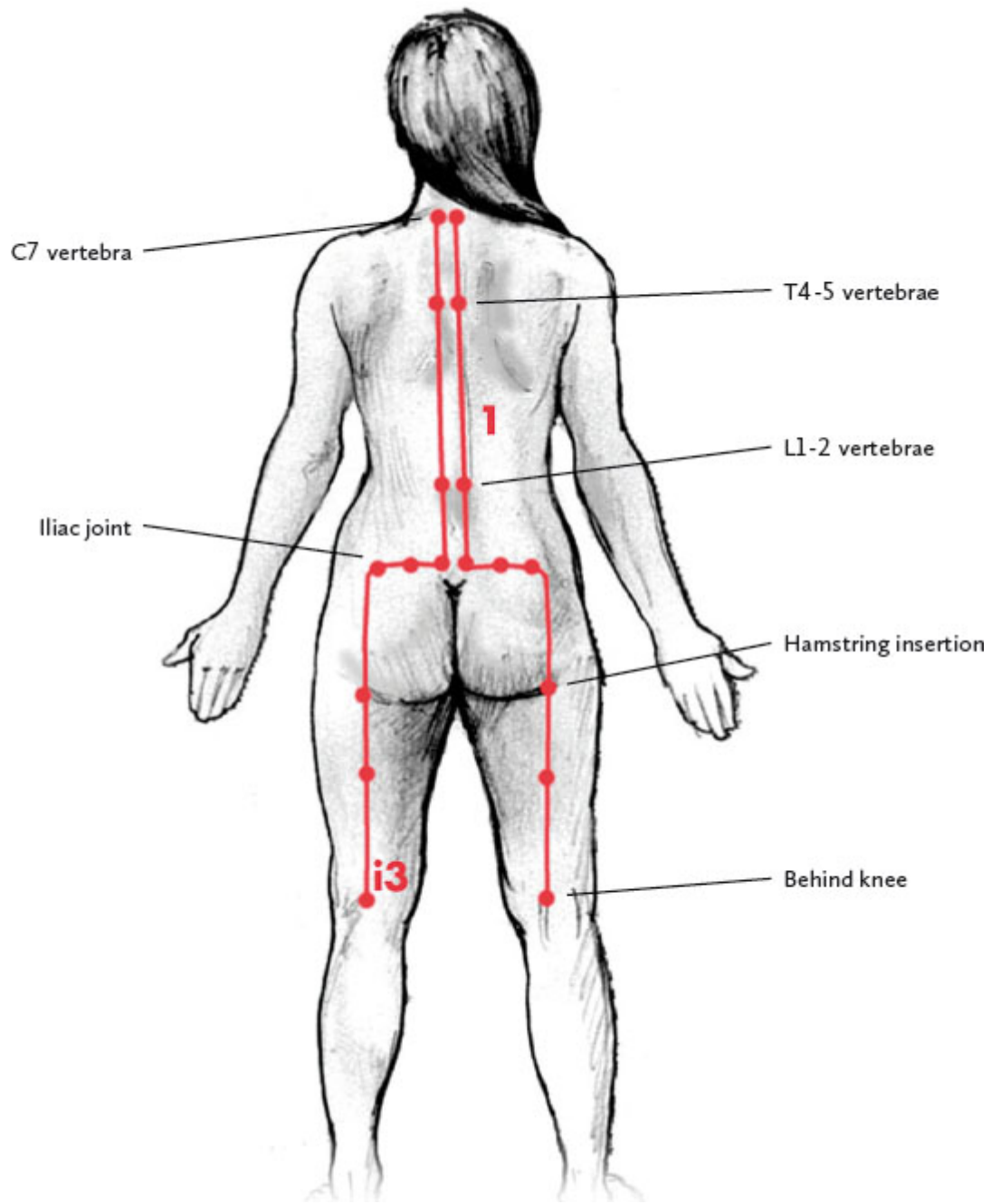
Itha and Pingala

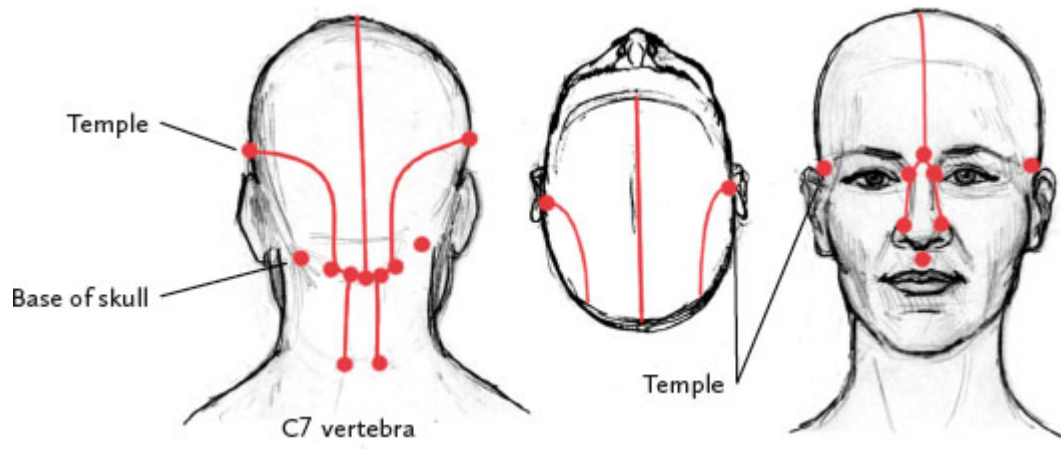
The Itha (left side) and Pingala (right side) begin at the navel, run down the first outer leg line (**o1**), turn at the knee, run up the third inner leg line (**i3**), along the top of the iliac crest, and up along the first back line (**1**). The

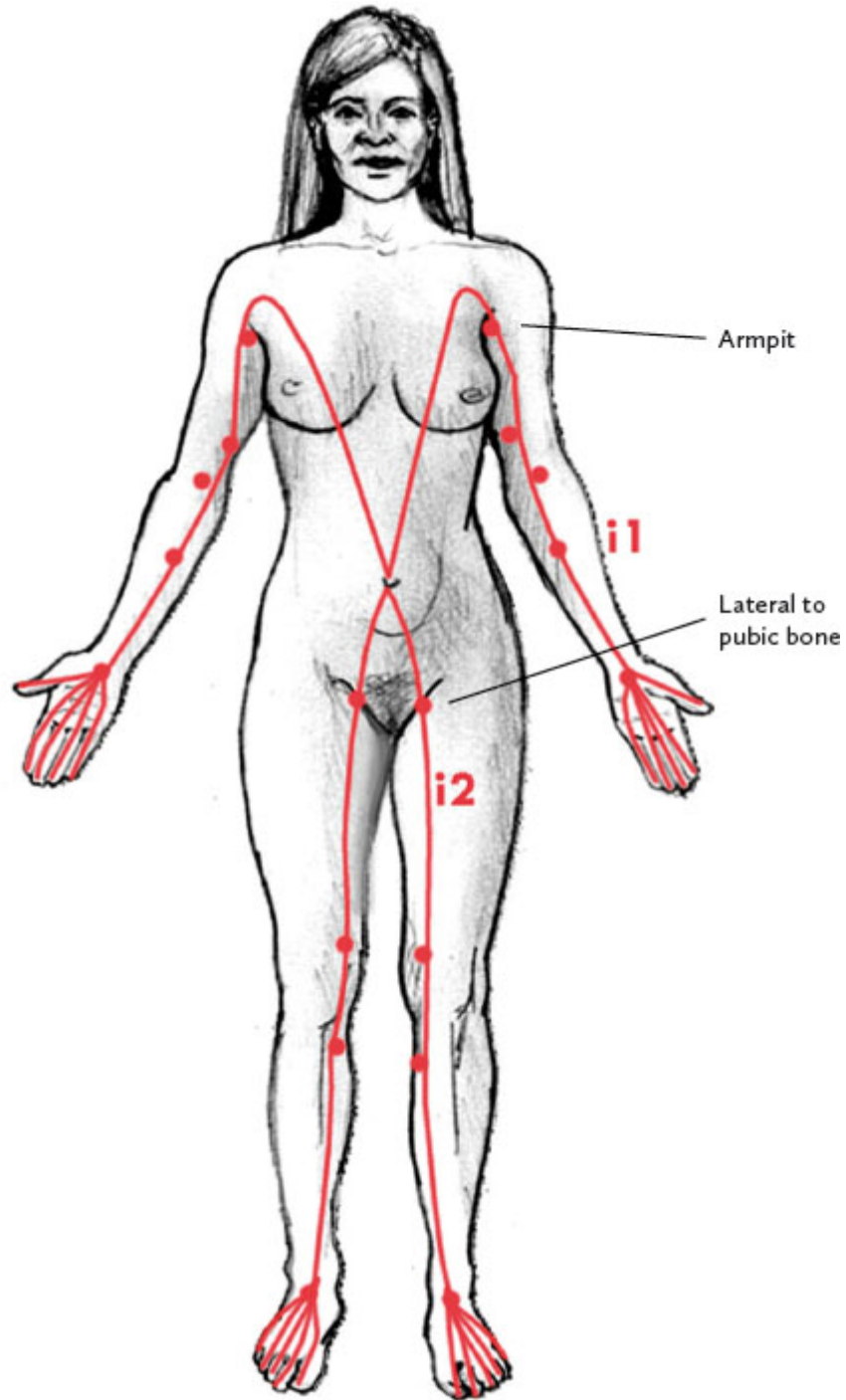
portion of **o1** and **i3** below the knee are considered secondary branch lines, but should be worked as part of this *sen*.

At the base of the skull, the two *sen* become three, with outer branches terminating at the temples, and the inner branch continuing over the top of the head, branching again at the third eye, and terminating at the nostrils.

The Itha and Pingala *sen* are used to treat the back, knees, head, nose, and sinuses.



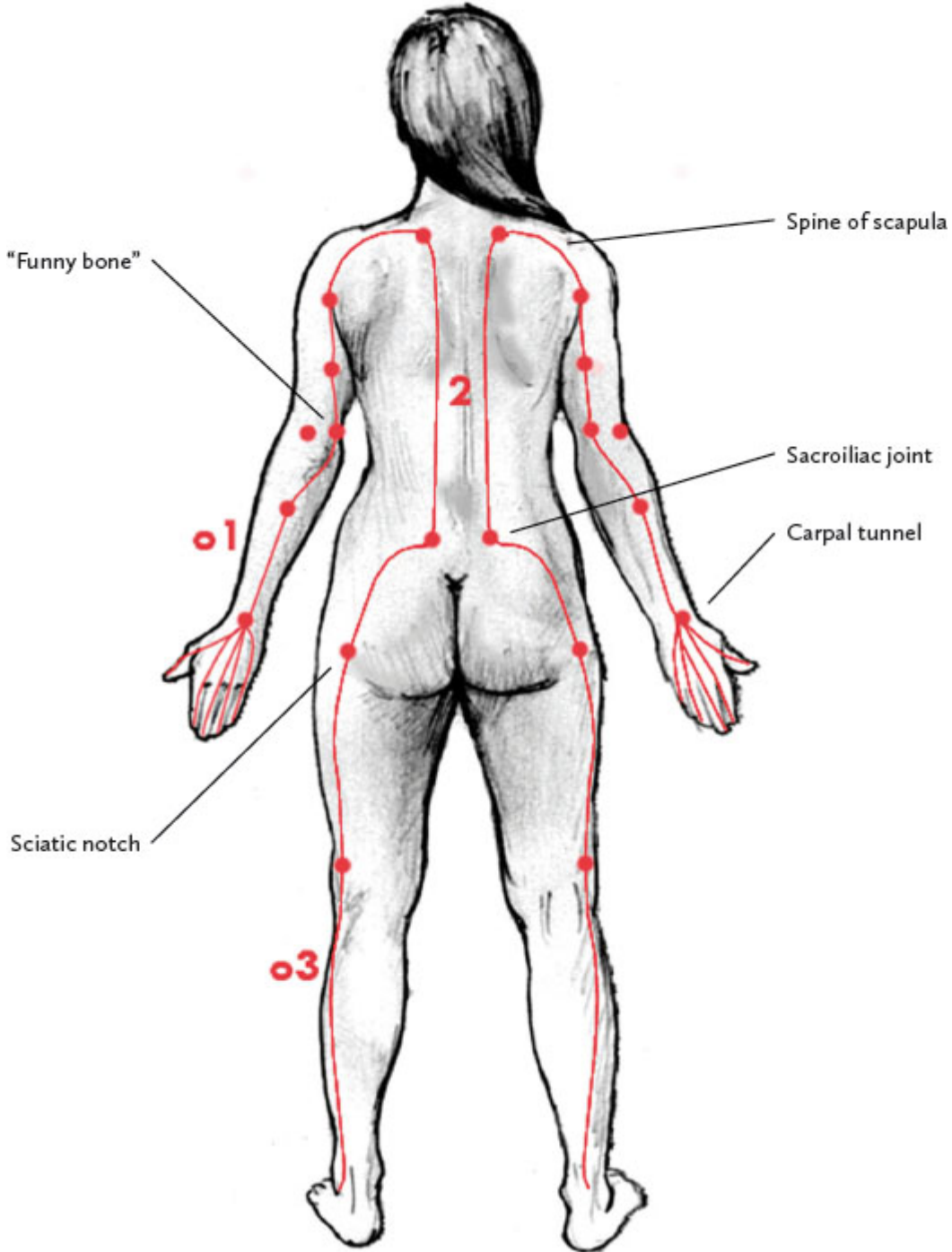


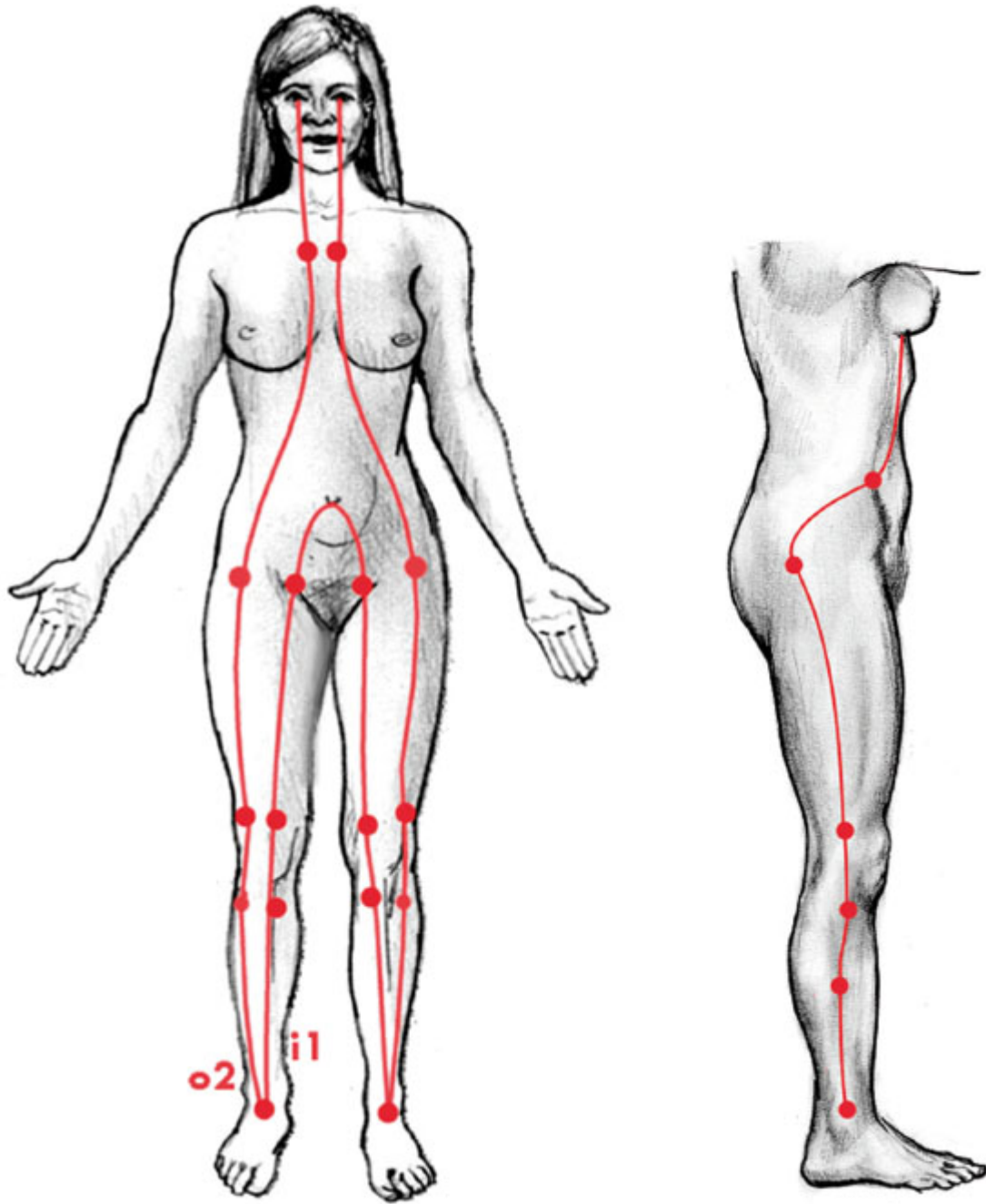


Kalatharee

The Kalatharee runs from the navel in four branches. It descends along the second inner leg lines (**i2**) and ascends along the inner arm lines terminating at the toes and fingers. Kalatharee is reflected on the back side

of the limbs along the third outer leg lines (o3) and the outer arm lines (o1). The Kalatharee is shown in most diagrams with a section of this *sen* running through the back along the second back line (2), running slightly lateral to Itha and Pingala. Kalatharee is used to treat the heart, chest, and limbs, as well as psychological and spiritual balance.

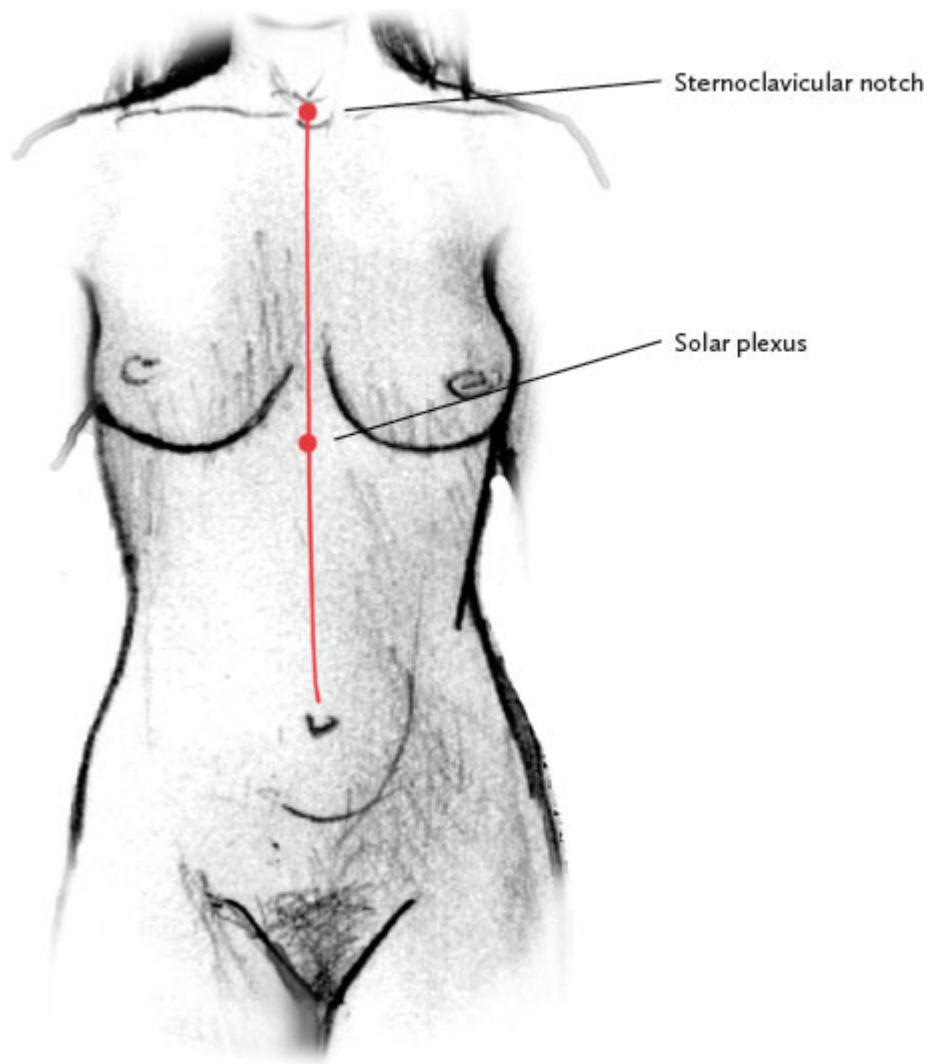




Sahatsarangi and Tawaree

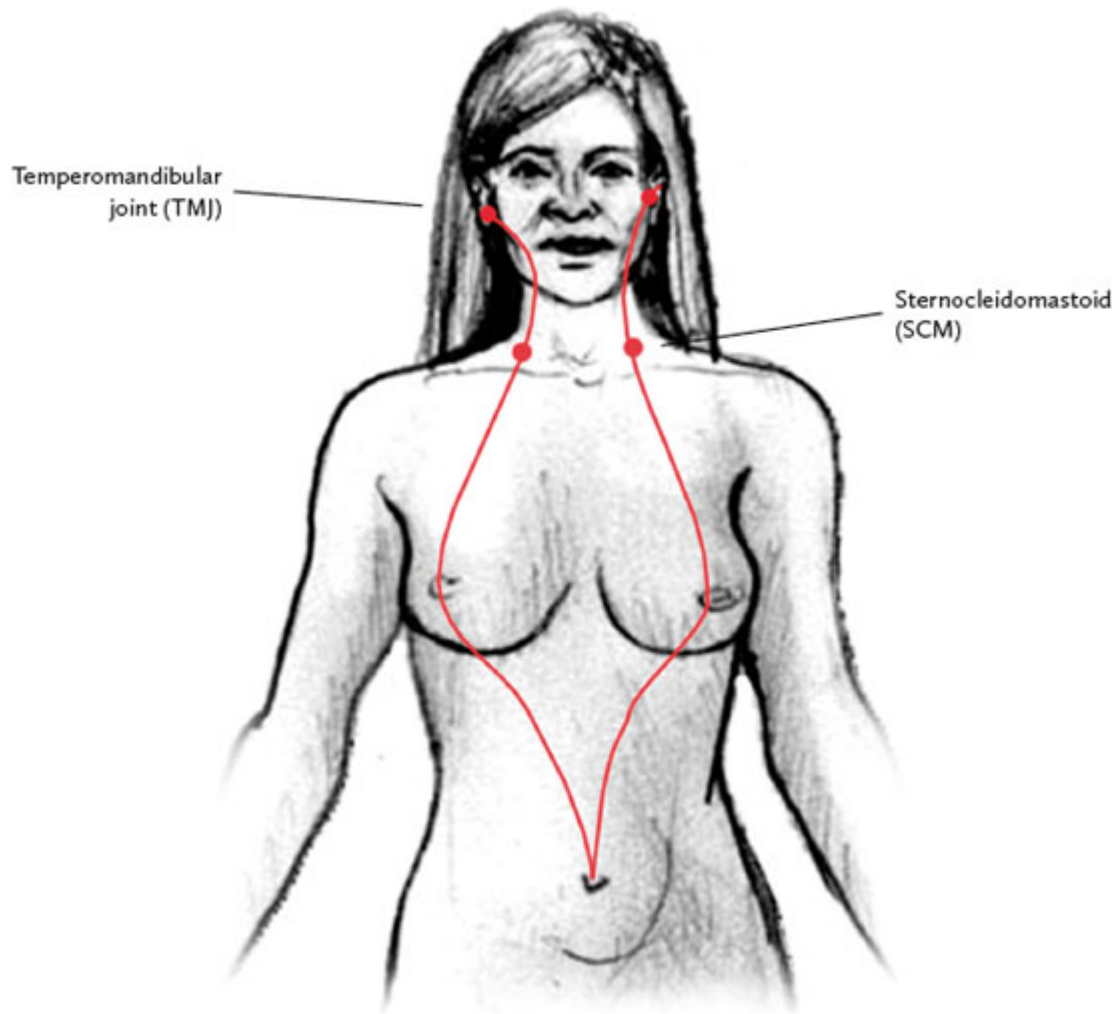
The Sahatsarangi (left side) and Tawaree (right side) run from the navel, descend the first inner leg line (**i1**), turn at the ankle, ascend the second outer leg line (**o2**), through the pelvic girdle, up the chest, and terminate at

the eyes. These *sen* are used to treat the eyes, the lower abdominal region, and the chest.



Sumana

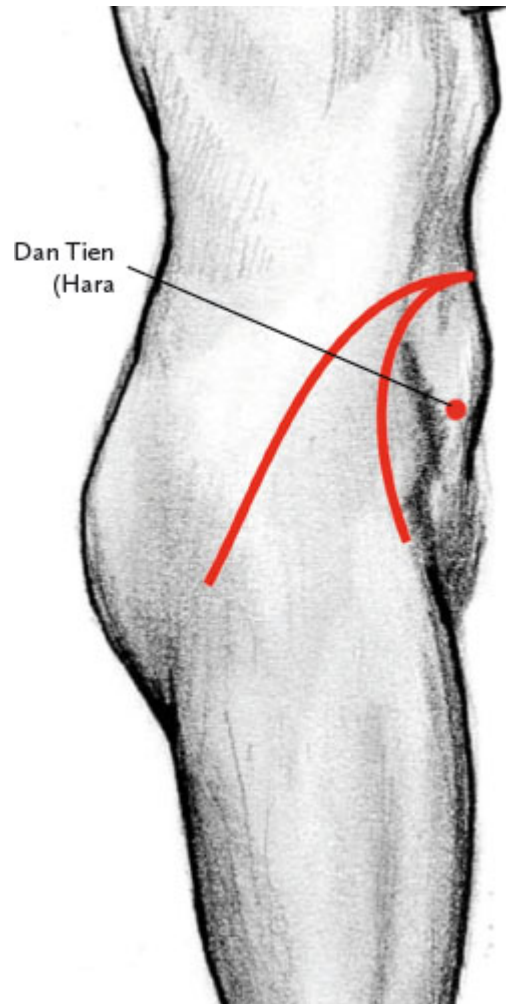
The Sumana runs from the navel to the base of the tongue. The Sumana is used to treat the upper digestive tract, heart, lungs, and upper respiratory system. This *sen* approximately correlates to the *Sushumna nadi* from the yoga tradition, the *sen* that runs up along the inside of the spinal cord and along which are found the six chakras, or main spiritual energy centers in the body. Thus, the Sumana is seen as a very important line of energy, and can be used in the treatment of any disorder.



Lawusang and Ulanga

The Lawusang (left side) and Ulanga (right side) run from the navel through the nipple, up the side of neck, and terminate just below the ears.

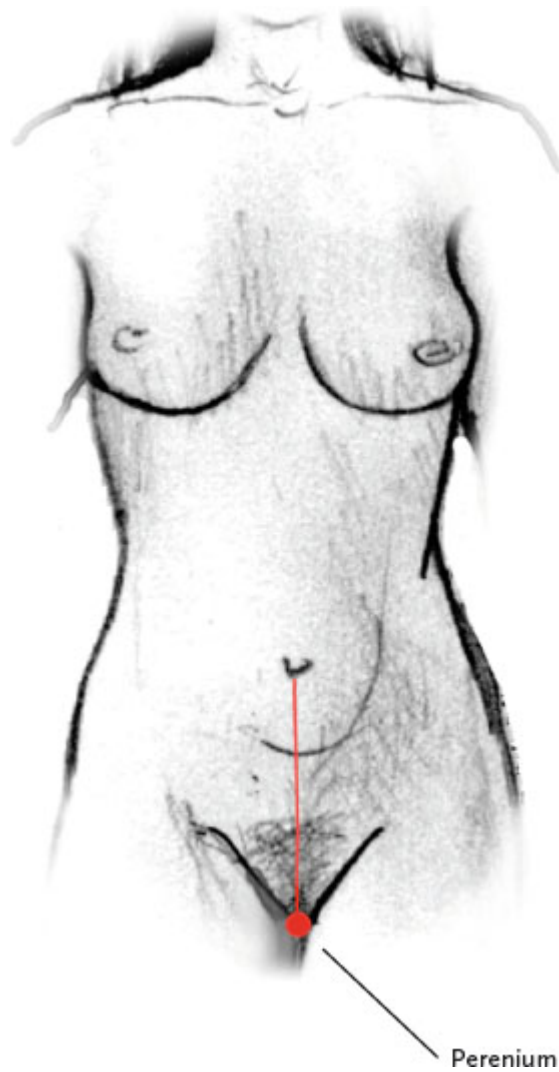
These *sen* are used to treat the breasts, ears, throat, mouth, teeth, and jaw.



Nantakawat (above)

The Nantakawat runs from the navel to the excretion organs in two branches. The Sikhinee runs to the urethra, and the Sukumand runs to the anus. The major acupressure point is the hara or dantian, shown in the diagram. Abdominal acupressure points are discussed in more detail in [Chapter 7](#).

Kitcha (below)



The Kitcha runs from the navel to the perineum, passing through the reproductive organs. In the male, the Kitcha is called the Pittakun, and in the female, it is called the Kitchana. It correlates to sexual function and fertility, including the testes and prostate in men and the uterus and ovaries in women.

The perineum is the main acupressure point on this sen, but this point should not be treated with direct acupressure. It can be stimulated, with the patient's consent, by applying warm herbal compress.

Correlations Between *Sen* and Symptoms

The chart below points out correlations between symptoms and the *sen*. To use this chart, locate the symptoms your client is exhibiting and determine which *sen* is affected. With this information you will be able to flip to the respective diagrams in this chapter and locate each *sen* and locate its corresponding acupressure points in Chapter 7. Therapy routines for each *sen* are discussed in Chapter 8.

Note that this chart is provided here only as a starting point. I encourage you to study it in order to understand how each symptom relates to the *sen* in question, but to move away from using charts and rote memorization as soon as possible.

ABDOMINAL PAIN/DISEASE/DISORDERS

(LOWER): Itha-Pingala, Kalatharee, Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree

ABDOMINAL PAIN/DISEASE/DISORDERS

(UPPER): Sumana

ACID REFLUX: Sumana

ANGINA: Kalatharee

ANXIETY: Itha-Pingala

APPENDICITIS: Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree

ARM PAIN/STIFFNESS/INJURY: Kalatharee

ARTHRITIS (OF LIMBS, DIGITS): Kalatharee

ASTHMA: Sumana

BACK PAIN/STIFFNESS/INJURY: Itha-Pingala

BELL'S PALSY: Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree, Lawusang-Ulanga

BIPOLAR DISORDER: Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree

BLOOD PRESSURE: Itha-Pingala

BREAST DISEASE/DISORDER/CANCER: Lawusang-Ulanga

BREATHING, DIFFICULTY OF: Sumana

BRONCHITIS: Sumana
CARDIAC ARRHYTHMIA: Kalatharee
CARDIAC DISEASE/DISORDER: Kalatharee
CATARACTS: Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree
CHEST PAIN: Kalatharee, Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree, Sumana, Lawusang-Ulanga
CHILL: Itha-Pingala
COLD: Itha-Pingala, Sumana
COLON PAIN/DISEASE/DISORDERS: Itha-Pingala, Kalatharee, Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree, Nantakawat
CONSTIPATION: Nantakawat
COUGH: Itha-Pingala, Kalatharee, Sumana
CRAMPS, MENSTRUAL: Nantakawat
CRAMPS, OF ABDOMEN: Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree
CRAMPS, OF LEG: Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree
DEPRESSION: Kalatharee
DIAPHRAGM SPASM/DISORDER: Sumana
DIARRHEA: Nantakawat
DIZZINESS: Itha-Pingala
EAR INFECTION/DISEASE/DISORDER: Lawusang-Ulanga
EPILEPSY: Kalatharee
ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION: Kitcha
EYE, INFECTION OF: Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree
EYES: Itha-Pingala, Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree
FACIAL PARALYSIS: Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree, Lawusang-Ulanga
FATIGUE: Itha-Pingala, Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree
FEVER: Itha-Pingala, Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree
FINGER PAIN/STIFFNESS/INJURY: Kalatharee
FOOT PAIN/STIFFNESS/INJURY: Kalatharee
GALL BLADDER DISEASE/DISORDERS: Itha-Pingala
GASTROINTESTINAL PAIN/DISEASE/ DISORDERS (LOWER): Itha-Pingala, Kalatharee, Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree, Nantakawat

GASTROINTESTINAL PAIN/DISEASE/DISORDERS (UPPER): Sumana, Lawusang-Ulanga

GLAUCOMA: Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree

GUM DISEASE: Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree

HAND PAIN/STIFFNESS/INJURY: Kalatharee

HEADACHE: Itha-Pingala

HEARING LOSS: Lawusang-Ulanga

HEART DISEASE: Kalatharee, Sumana

HERNIA: Kalatharee, Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree, Kitcha

INCONTINENCE: Nantakawat

INDIGESTION: Sumana

INFERTILITY: Kitcha

INSOMNIA: Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree

INTESTINAL DISEASE/DISORDERS: Itha-Pingala, Kalatharee, Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree, Nantakawat

JAUNDICE: Kalatharee

JAW PAIN/STIFFNESS: Lawusang-Ulanga

KNEE PAIN/STIFFNESS/INJURY: Itha-Pingala, Kalatharee, Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree

LACTATION: Lawusang-Ulanga

LEG PAIN/STIFFNESS/INJURY: Kalatharee

LETHARGY: Itha-Pingala, Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree

LIVER DISEASE/DISORDERS: Pingala

LUNGS DISEASE/DISORDER/INFECTION: Sumana, Lawusang-Ulanga

MENSTRUATION, IRREGULARITIES OR PAIN: Nantakawat

NASAL CONGESTION: Itha-Pingala

NAUSEA: Sumana

NECK PAIN/STIFFNESS/INJURY: Itha-Pingala

ORAL INFECTION: Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree

OVARIAN DISEASE/DISORDER: Kitcha

PARALYSIS (OF LIMB/S): Kalatharee

PARALYSIS (SPINAL CORD INJURY): Itha-Pingala

PEPTIC ULCER: Sumana
PROSTATE DISEASE/DISORDER/CANCER: Kitcha
PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS: Kalatharee
REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM DISEASE/DISORDER: Kitcha
RESPIRATORY SYSTEM INFECTION/DISEASE/DISORDER: Sumana
RHEUMATIC HEART DISEASE: Kalatharee
SCHIZOPHRENIA: Kalatharee
SEPTUM: Itha-Pingala
SEX DRIVE, LACK OF: Kitcha
SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION: Kitcha
SHOCK: Kalatharee
SHOULDER PAIN/STIFFNESS: Itha-Pingala
SINUSITIS: Itha-Pingala
SORE THROAT: Itha-Pingala, Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree, Sumana,
Lawusang-Ulanga
STOMACH PAIN/DISEASE/DISORDER: Sumana, Lawusang-Ulanga
STRESS: Itha-Pingala
TESTICULAR DISEASE/DISORDER: Kitcha
THROAT INFECTION/DISEASE/DISORDER: Itha-Pingala, Sahatsarangsi-
Tawaree, Sumana, Lawusang-Ulanga
TINNITIS: Lawusang-Ulanga
TMJ: Lawusang-Ulanga
TOE PAIN/STIFFNESS/INJURY: Kalatharee
TOOTHACHE: Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree, Lawusang-Ulanga
ULCER, PEPTIC: Sumana
URINARY TRACT INFECTION: Itha-Pingala, Nantakawat
UROGENITAL INFECTION/DISEASE/DISORDER: Itha-Pingala, Sahatsarangsi-
Tawaree
UTERUS DISEASE/DISORDER: Nantakawat, Kitcha
VAGINAL INFECTION/DISEASE/DISORDER: Kitcha
VERTIGO: Itha-Pingala
VISION, IMPAIRMENT OF: Itha-Pingala, Sahatsarangsi-Tawaree

VOMITING: Sumana

WEAKNESS: Itha-Pingala, Sahatsarangsi- Tawaree

WHOOPING COUGH: Kalatharee

Correlations Between *Sen* and Massage Steps

Each step in the classic routine specifically targets one or more *sen*. Additional lines may be engaged by adjusting your pressure or the client's alignment (some of these adjustments are listed in Chapter 4 as variations).

Going through the chart below, you will learn how the classic routine approaches all of the ten main *sen* in a balanced and cyclical way. The lines are each worked proportionately in order to give a perfectly balanced massage. Learning these correlations will also assist you in developing the therapy routines discussed in Chapter 8.

Opening prayer

1. all

Flush toward navel

2-8. Kalatharee

9-16. Itha/Pingala, Kalatharee

17-18. Kalatharee, Sahatsarangsi/Tawaree

19-20. Itha/Pingala

21. Kalatharee, Sahatsarangsi/Tawaree

22. Itha/Pingala

23-24. all leg lines

25. Sahatsarangsi/Tawaree

26. Itha/Pingala

27. Kalatharee

28. Kalatharee, Sumana, Nantakawat, Kitcha

29. Kalatharee, Sahatsarangsi/Tawaree
30-31. all leg lines
32. Itha/Pingala
33. Kalatharee
34. Kalatharee, Sahatsarangsi/Tawaree
35. all leg lines
36-50. Kalatharee
51-53. Kalatharee, Sahatsarangsi/ Tawaree, Sumana, Lawusang/ Ulanga
54. Sumana
55-57. all, especially Sumana, Nantakawat, Kitcha
58. all leg lines
59-60. all
- Flush toward crown**
61. Sumana, Nantakawat, Kitcha
62-63. Itha/Pingala
64. Kalatharee
65. Itha/Pingala, Sumana, Nantakawat
66. Sahatsarangsi/Tawaree, Sumana, Nantakawat
67. Itha/Pingala, Sumana, Nantakawat
68-70. Kalatharee, Sumana, Nantakawat
71. Itha/Pingala, Sumana, Nantakawat
72. Kalatharee, Sumana, Nantakawat
73-76. all
77. Itha/Pingala, Kalatharee
78-79. Kalatharee
80-84. itha/Pingala
85. Kalatharee
86-87. itha/Pingala
88-89. Itha/Pingala, Kalatharee
90. Itha/Pingala, Nantakawat
91-94. Itha/Pingala, Kalatharee
95-97. Kalatharee

98. Itha/Pingala, Sahatsarangsi/ Tawaree, Sumana, Lawusang/ Ulanga
99. all leg lines (if engaging the arms, also involves Kalatharee, Sumana, Lawusang/Ulanga)
- 100-102. Lawusang/Ulanga
103. Itha/Pingala, Kalatharee
104. Itha/Pingala
105. Itha/Pingala, Sahatsarangsi/ Tawaree, Sumana, Lawusang/ Ulanga
106. all, especially Itha/Pingala
- Full-body flush and final metta**
107. all, especially Lawusang/Ulanga
108. all

Go through the classic routine and understand how each step correlates with the *sen* listed on the previous page. Think about both the stretches that you are delivering to the client's body as well as the location of your hands, thumbs, or other presses.

For a helpful review, go through the side, seated, and advanced poses in Chapter 5 and see if you can determine the *sen* activated in each step. Once you have identified the steps that correlate with each *sen*, creating your own therapy routine will be straightforward.

The Shivagakomarpaj ("Northern") Style of *Sen* Work

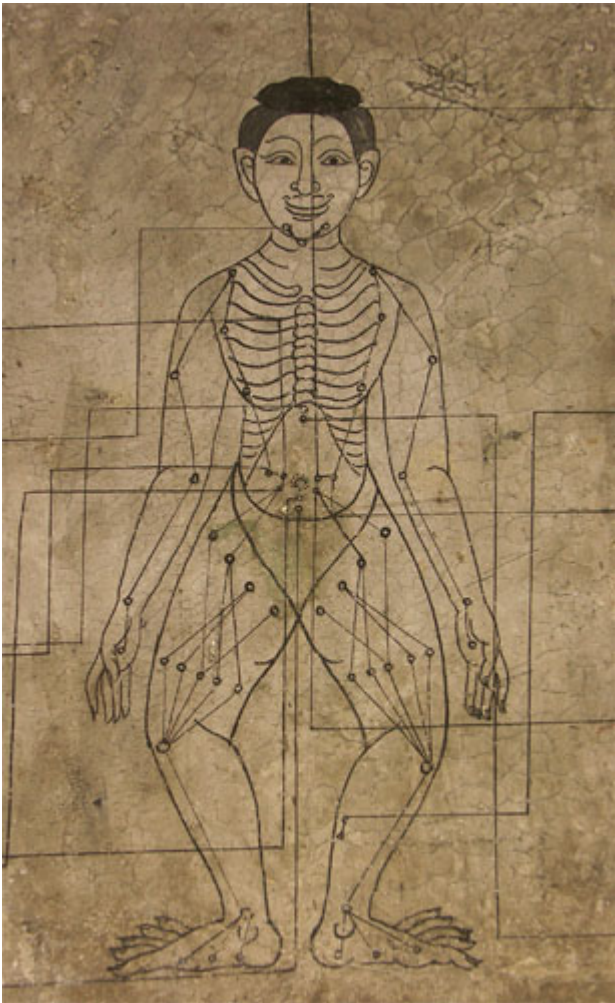
One of the most noticeable differences between the Shivagakomarpaj Lineage routine and other styles of Thai Massage is the manner in which the *sen* are manipulated. In the Shivagakomarpaj style (often called the "Northern Style" by Westerners), practitioners use a gentle technique to

apply thumb presses along the *sen*. Pressure is applied perpendicularly to the surface of the skin, pressing into the skin with increasing force, then slowly lifted off.

On the other hand, other styles of Thai Massage often use a stronger form of manipulation (usually called “Southern Style” by Westerners). Practitioners still use the thumb press to apply pressure perpendicularly into the surface of the skin. Once the maximum force has been applied to the area, however, the practitioner may quickly roll the thumb across the *sen* while lifting the thumb off. The motion, somewhat like “plucking” a guitar string, is a mild shock to the client, but when applied correctly, is an effective method of relaxing tension, particularly for very stiff or sore muscles. With some practice, this technique can be an interesting and pleasant addition to the practitioner’s repertoire of hand techniques.

To practice this style of thumb press, and to test that it is being performed properly, pluck the middle of your forearm, along the middle branch of arm line **i1**. When this line is plucked correctly, the fingers of the hand should twitch involuntarily. Using this exercise as a guideline, practice applying this style of thumb press to other parts of the body, such as along the back lines. Note that this technique should not be attempted on clients without proficient practice. Additionally, great care must be taken not to pluck too hard, for more harm than good can result from improper use of this technique.

As discussed in Chapter 1, although there are some general differences between the Shivagakomarpaj lineage style and other traditions in Thailand, these are not hard and fast distinctions. In actual fact, many styles and approaches are used interchangeably by many Thai Massage therapists all over the country. Such eclectic approaches should only be attempted when the practitioner is equally comfortable with varying massage styles and can make a smooth transition between them, as it can be disconcerting to the client to abruptly change styles in the middle of a massage.



CHAPTER 7

Thai Acupressure Therapy



Acupressure Techniques

Thai acupressure, or *jap sen*, is an integral part of the practice of Thai therapeutic massage. The English word “acupressure” is used in modern parlance both as a name for a specific Chinese bodywork technique and as a more general term meaning simply pressure applied to particular points on the body. In this book, I always use the term in the second, more general sense. Thai acupressure, in essence, is the application of pressure (usually with the thumbs) to points that lie on the sen, in order to stimulate or dissipate energy. Pressure on specific points is used to energize the line as a whole, and is an indispensable part of the therapeutic Thai Massage routine.

THIS CHAPTER presents an acupressure atlas of the human body, with diagrams of each of the common acupressure points used in Thai Massage for therapy. These points are usually easy to find, but you should experiment on yourself until you get them right. Although there is no easy correlation between acupressure points and anatomical structures, they frequently can be found along major nerves, next to bones, or around the joints. Acupressure points usually have a different qualitative feel from the surrounding area. An acupressure point may feel more sensitive, or may hurt if pressed with more than mild pressure. Because these points are being pressed with a thumb rather than a needle, the therapist need not develop the detailed accuracy of the acupuncturist. However, it is important to find the correct point as precisely as possible. Most times, if you begin with a

thumb circle to help orient yourself, you will find the point with relative ease.

The Shivagakomarpaj Lineage teaches that three steps should be followed when applying acupressure to each point:

- Before acupressure is applied, the point should be warmed up with five clockwise and five counterclockwise thumb circles.
- Acupressure should be given with thumb presses. Pressure should be applied with the pad of the thumb, perpendicularly to the surface of the skin. (See Chapter 3 for proper body mechanics for thumb press.) Each point should be pressed three times. Each time, the therapist should begin with slowly increasing pressure over a period of 5 seconds. Maximum pressure should be held for 2 or 3 seconds. The pressure should be lifted slowly over 2 or 3 seconds, for a total of about 10 seconds per point.
- After acupressure, the point should be soothed with five clockwise and five counterclockwise thumb circles.

It is important to note that only acupressure points should be pressed in the above manner. Acupressure should never be administered to bones, to “cold pressure” injuries (see below), or to other sensitive areas of the body. Additionally, there are some acupressure points that are too vulnerable for thumb presses, such as the temples and many facial points. These areas should be pressed gently with finger presses or finger circles instead.

Different body types will respond differently to acupressure, and the practitioner will have to practice in order to get a feel for “the right touch.” As a general rule, overweight people are more sensitive to acupressure and require less pressure. Very thin people can also be quite sensitive. Muscular or athletic people, on the other hand, require more strength, and in some cases you may find it necessary to use elbow, knee, or foot presses to administer effective stimulation. This is also true of clients experiencing

paralysis or numbness. In these situations, maximum pressure is desirable for maximum stimulation, although of course care must be taken not to injure the client.

With any body type, pay careful attention to the client as acupressure is being administered. Over time, you will develop the ability to feel what your client's body is telling you with your thumbs, and will never have to guess how much pressure is too much. For now, always start by giving less pressure than you think will be necessary, and build up if desired. Any twitch or grimace of the face, tightening or spasms of the muscles being touched, or other indication of discomfort from the client should be regarded as a sign to use less pressure. Although you may coach them to breathe through it, if the client is not comfortable, acupressure may have to be suspended. Remember, you may always use herbal compresses as a substitute for acupressure in overly sensitive clients (see Chapter 9).

Hot and Cold Pressure

Two major problems can occur with the *sen*: breakage and blockage. The difference between the breakage and blockage of a *sen* is often difficult to discern for a beginning practitioner. In both cases, the client will typically report pain as the major symptom. It is important to differentiate between the two, however, since this will determine how you administer your therapy.

***Sen* Breaks**

The main causes of a *sen* break are muscle strains, tendon sprains, nerve pain, bruises, and bone injuries. *Sen* breaks are almost always acute conditions, brought on by a sudden injury, and need immediate attention. Traditionally it is said that broken *sen* cause energy to escape the channel

and pool in the surrounding tissue, typically producing sharp, shooting pain. Breaks thus will be accompanied by swelling, redness, and sensitivity in the area around the injury.

Sen breaks are said to require “cold treatment.” The word “cold” is being used here both literally and metaphorically. Ice packs or cold herbal compresses should be applied to the body part (see Chapter 9), and the massage practitioner should apply only indirect or “cold” pressure to this area.

cold pressure is a technique to help dissipate pooled energy away from the affected area in order to allow the break to heal. Light thumb presses should be applied to the *sen* above and below the break, and should move outward from the affected area all the way to the ends of the *sen* or segment. The practitioner should take care to never press toward or directly on the broken *sen*, as this will cause an increase in pooled energy rather than contribute to its dissipation. Should the client experience pain at any time, use a lighter touch.



The diagram above shows a broken *sen* with localized swelling in red. Black arrows indicate where pressure should be applied. Never apply pressure directly to the swollen area.

After 48 hours, a *sen* breakage will have begun to mend, and the swelling and heat will typically have subsided. At this point, cold therapy should be

replaced by hot therapy. The injury should be treated as a blockage in order to clear out stagnated energy and get things flowing properly again.

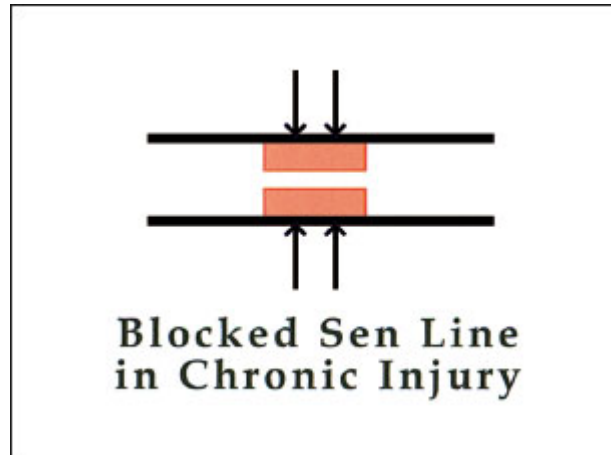
Sen Blockages

Blocked *sen* are usually chronic conditions caused by fatigue, stress, bad posture, repetitive stress, or previous injuries. Blockages usually manifest as muscle knots, tendonitis, localized stiffness, and soreness, but they can also be characterized by dull pain, weakness, stiffness, numbness, and sometimes even paralysis. Blockages are explained as obstructions in the *sen* that cause the flow of energy to organs and limbs farther along the channel to be inhibited. They are metaphorically analogous to cholesterol buildup in the arteries.

Sen blockages are treated with hot therapy, which includes application of hot compresses (see Chapter 9), hot baths or saunas with spicy and aromatic herbs, and “hot pressure.” Hot pressure is acupuncture applied directly to the location of the blockage with strong intensity in order to break up the obstruction and increase free flow of energy.

Typically, hot acupuncture is given with thumb presses, but some clients may require (or prefer) the use of the elbow, knee, or heel press on the site of a blockage. Always remember that care must be taken not to injure the client with these more intensive techniques. *Sen* are particularly vulnerable at a site of blockage, and too much pressure may in fact cause a breakage. If a client is experiencing too much pain to effectively apply pressure to the blockage, hot compresses may be used instead (see Chapter 9).

Whatever method you use, apply pressure to the site of the blockage, and then to move along the *sen* away from the site, as if “flushing” the blockage away. Travel all the way to the ends of the *sen* or *sen* segment, and return by pressing toward the site. Travel through the site and continue to the opposite end of the segment. Then return back to the site once again. This encourages the disposal of stagnated energy and the flow of fresh energy in both directions. Blockages also respond well to Opening the Wind Gates.



The diagram above shows a blocked sen. Arrows indicate where pressure should be applied, directly on the blockage.

Acupressure Atlas

In the acupressure diagrams that follow, I have drawn exclusively on the Shivagakomarpaj Lineage tradition. However, because of the strong Chinese and Indian influence that permeate Thai Traditional Medicine, you will see some parallels. Virtually all of the points in the Thai system are also used in Chinese acupuncture and/or Indian *marma* therapy.⁶ However, keep in mind that this atlas is intended for Thai therapy, and that the points are almost always understood differently in the Thai system.

The points in this atlas are numbered in no particular order, and this numbering system is not a traditional one. In most cases, I have simply numbered from one extremity to the other. Until there is some agreed-upon system of numbering, the reader should not expect these numbers to correlate with those used by other schools or in other books. Note in the following diagrams that some points are shown in more than one picture to facilitate locating them. Also note that points mirrored on the opposite side of the body are not numbered separately.

One final note, when working on a particular issue with acupressure, in addition to the points listed in the chart, the therapist should also press as many points as possible in and near the site of the problem. For example, the chart lists several points on the head for use in treatment of headache. These are simply the most effective points, but the therapist should not limit therapy strictly to these. Other points in the head and neck should also be pressed. Likewise, because the *Itha* and *Pingala* are the *sen* most commonly associated with headaches, all of the acupressure points lying along both these lines should be pressed. Remember that acupressure for any particular disorder should always cover the entire body.

Correlations Between Symptoms and Acupressure Points

ASTHMA: *Hands* 19, 22, *Arms* 5, 11, *Torso* 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, *Back* 11, 15, 16, 19

APPENDICITIS: *Feet* 12

BACK PAIN/INJURY/ARTHRITIS: *Feet* 22, *Hands* 4, 22, 26, 30, 32, *Legs* 8, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, *Back* 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19

BREAST AILMENTS: *Torso* 11, *Back* 15, 16, 19, 21

BREATHING DIFFICULTIES: *Hands* 19, 22, *Arms* 5, 11, *Torso* 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, *Back* 11, 15, 16, 19

CONSTIPATION: *Feet* 9, 10, 11, 12, *Torso* 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, *Head* 9, 8

COUGH: *Hands* 22, 36, 37, 38, 39, *Arms* 5, 11, *Torso* 10, 13, *Back* 11, 15, 16, 19

DIZZINESS: *Head* 10, 16

EAR AILMENTS: *Hands* 36, 37, 40, 41, *Feet* 1, 2, *Torso* 12, *Head* 5, 6, 7, 13

ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION: *Legs 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 26, Arms 7, Torso 2, Back 9, 10, Head 19*

EYE AILMENTS: *Feet 3, 4, Hands 38, 39, 42, 43, Legs 7, Head 18*

FACIAL PAIN/NUMBNESS/PARALYSIS: *Hands 5, Head 5, 8, 9, 20*

FAINTING: *Head 10, 16*

FATIGUE: *Legs 26, Torso 5, Head 10, 16, 17, 19*

FEVER: *Hands 34, Back 4*

GASTROINTESTINAL AILMENTS: *Hands 4, 5, 8, Legs 8, 10, Torso 7, 8, 9, 10, Back 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19, Head 14*

HEADACHE: *Feet 7, Legs 2, Hands 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 17, 20, 26, Head 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 17, 16, 19*

HEART: *Feet 7, Hands 17*

HEEL PAIN/INJURY: *Legs 25, 27, 28*

HICCUPS: *Torso 17*

HIP PAIN/INJURY/ARTHRITIS: *Legs 33, Hands 20, 26, Arms 14, Torso 2, 3, Back 8, 9, 10, 11*

HYPERTENSION: *Feet 7, 16, Hands 1, 5, 10, Arms 23, Back 10, 11, 17, 20, 21, Head 2, 3, 4, 19*

INDIGESTION: *Feet 8, Hands 4, 5, 8, Legs 8, 10, Torso 7, 8, 9, 10, Back 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19*

INFERTILITY: *Legs 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 26, Arms 7, Torso 2, Back 9, 10, Head 19*

INSOMNIA: *Legs 10,21, Hands 17, Head 16*

KIDNEY AILMENTS: *Torso 6*

KNEE PAIN/INJURY/ARTHRITIS: *Legs 2, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 30, 31, 32*

LEG PAIN/INJURY/ARTHRITIS: *Legs 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, Arms 12, 15, 16, 23*

LIBIDO, LOSS OF: *Legs 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 26, Arms 7, Torso 2, Back 9, 10, Head 19*

LIVER AILMENTS: *Feet 6*

LUNGS: *Hands 19, 22, Arms 5, 11, Torso 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, Back 11, 15, 16, 19*

MENSTRUATION: *Legs 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 25, Torso 6, 7, 8, 9, 20, Back 8, 10, 15, 16, 19, Head 19*

MOTION SICKNESS: *Hands 24, 19, Arms 3*

MOUTH: *Torso 14, 15, 16, 17, Back 17, Head 8, 9, 10, 12*

NAUSEA: *Hands 24, 19, Arms 3, Head 8*

NECK PAIN/INJURY/ARTHRITIS: *Legs 6, Hands 2, 4, 5, 24, 32, 34, Arms 5, Torso 13, Back 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, Head 1, 2, 3, 4*

PMS: *Legs 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 25, Torso 6, 7, 8, 9, 20, Back 8, 10, 15, 16, 19, Head 19*

PSYCHOLOGICAL AILMENTS: *Head 16, 17*

REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM AILMENTS: *Legs 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 25, Torso 6, 7, 8, 9, 20, Back 8, 10, 15, 16, 19, Head 19*

RESPIRATORY AILMENTS: *Feet 7, Hands 28, Arms 5, 11, Torso 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, Back 11, 15, 16, 19*

SACROILIAC JOINT PAIN/INJURY/ARTHRITIS: *Legs 33, Hands 20, 26, Arms 14, Torso 2, 3, Back 8, 9, 10, 11*

SCIATICA: *Feet 15, Hands 6, Legs 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, Arms 12, 15, 16, 22, 23*

SHOULDER PAIN/INJURY/ARTHRITIS: *Hands 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 30, 31, 32, 33, Arms 17, 22, 23, Torso 13, Back 8, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, Head 1, 2, 3, 4*

SINUS COMPLAINTS: *Head 3, 4, 9, 14*

SORE THROAT: *Hands 34, Torso 10, 13*

STOMACHACHE: *Hands 4, 5, 8, Legs 8, 10, Torso 7, 8, 9, 10, Back 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19*

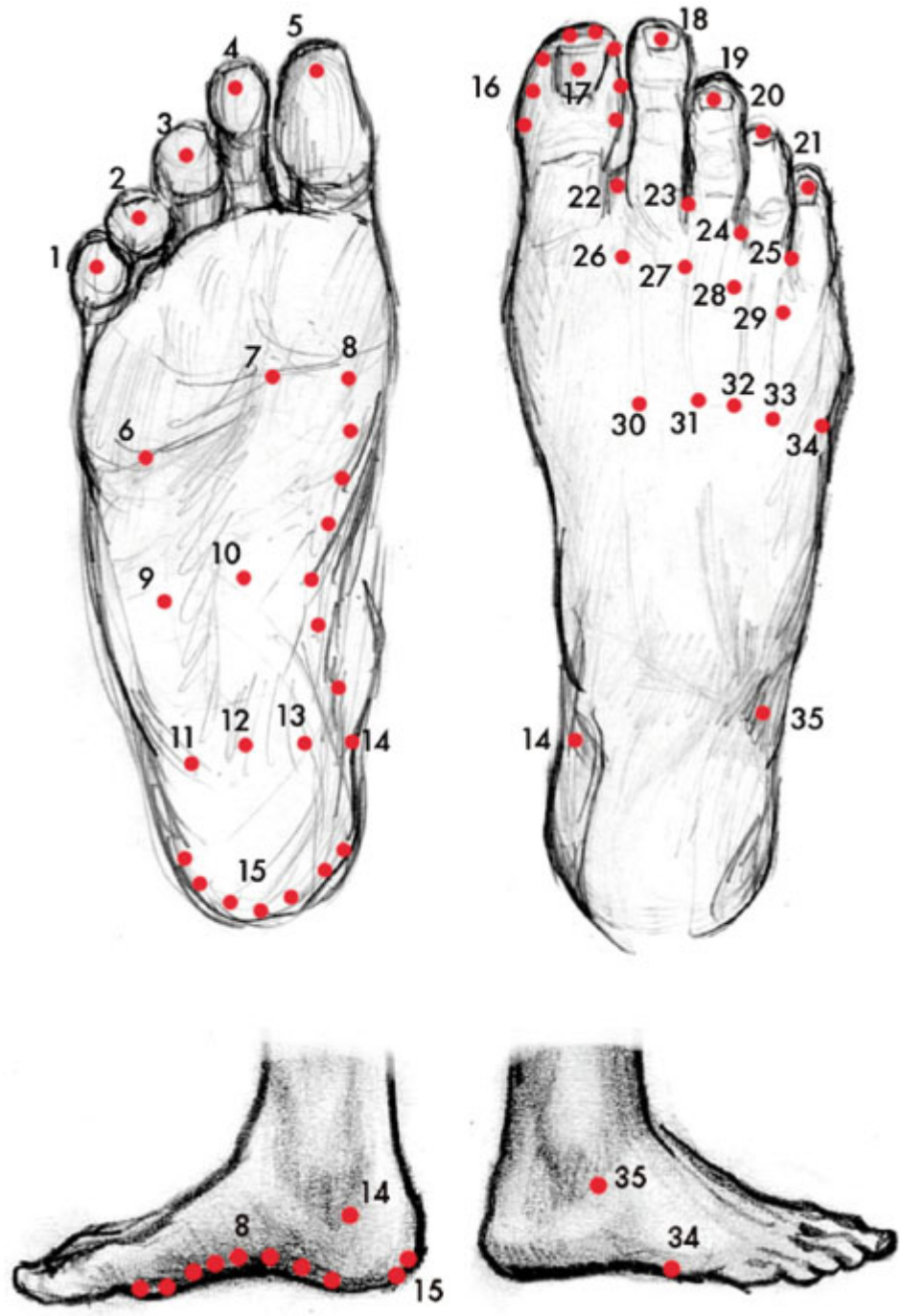
STRESS: *Feet 7, 16, Hands 1, 5, 10, Arms 23, Back 10, 11, 17, 20, 21, Head 2, 3, 4, 19*

TOOTHACHE: *Head 12, Hands 5, 7*

VOMITING: *Hands 24, 19, Arms 3, Head 8*

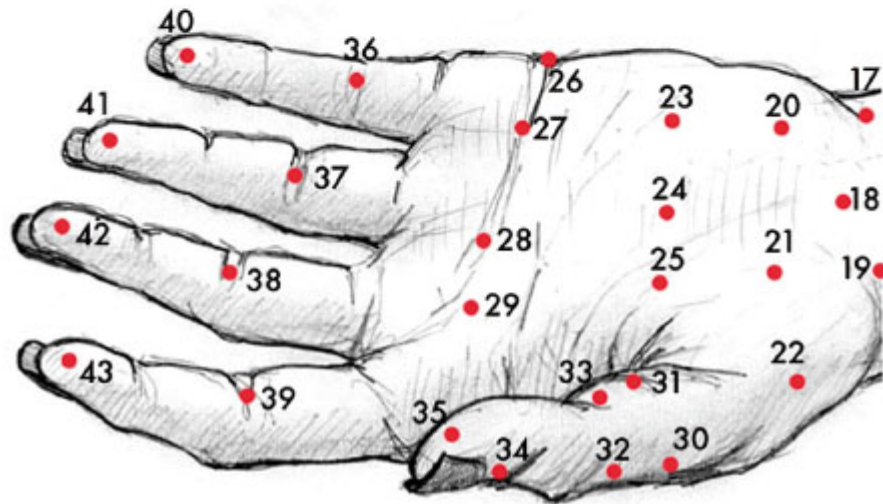
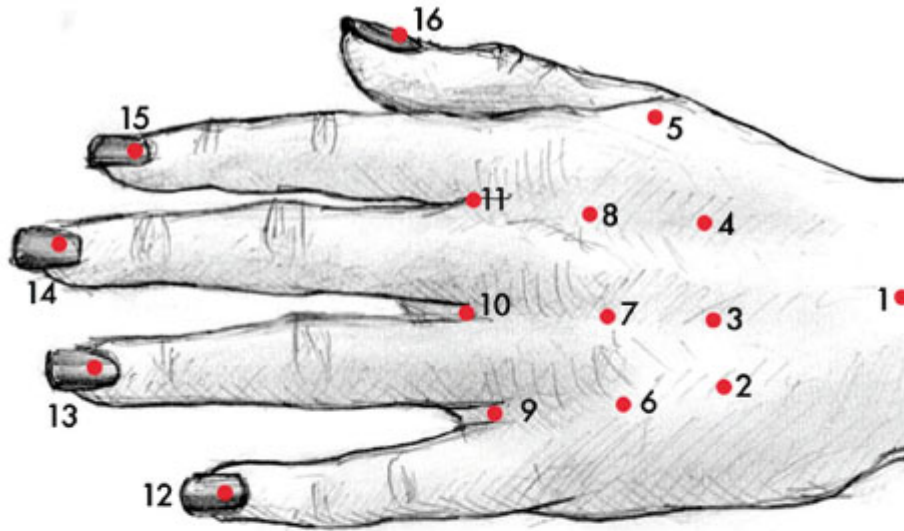
Acupressure Points of the Feet

NOTES:



- 8. Along the entire arch of the foot.
- 15. Include the entire perimeter of the heel.
- 16. Include the entire perimeter of the big toe.
- 22-33. Between the metatarsal bones.

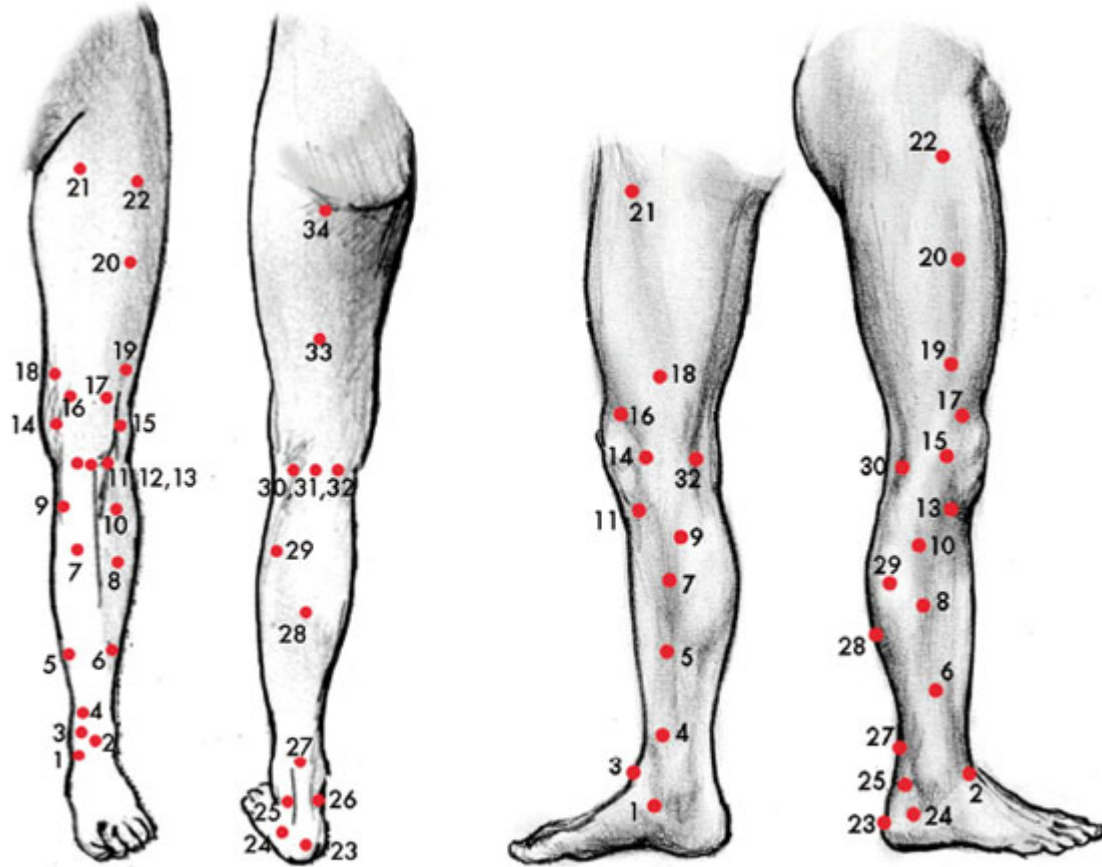
Acupressure Points of the Hands



NOTES:

2-11. Between the metacarpal bones

Acupressure Points of the Legs



Front

Back

Inside

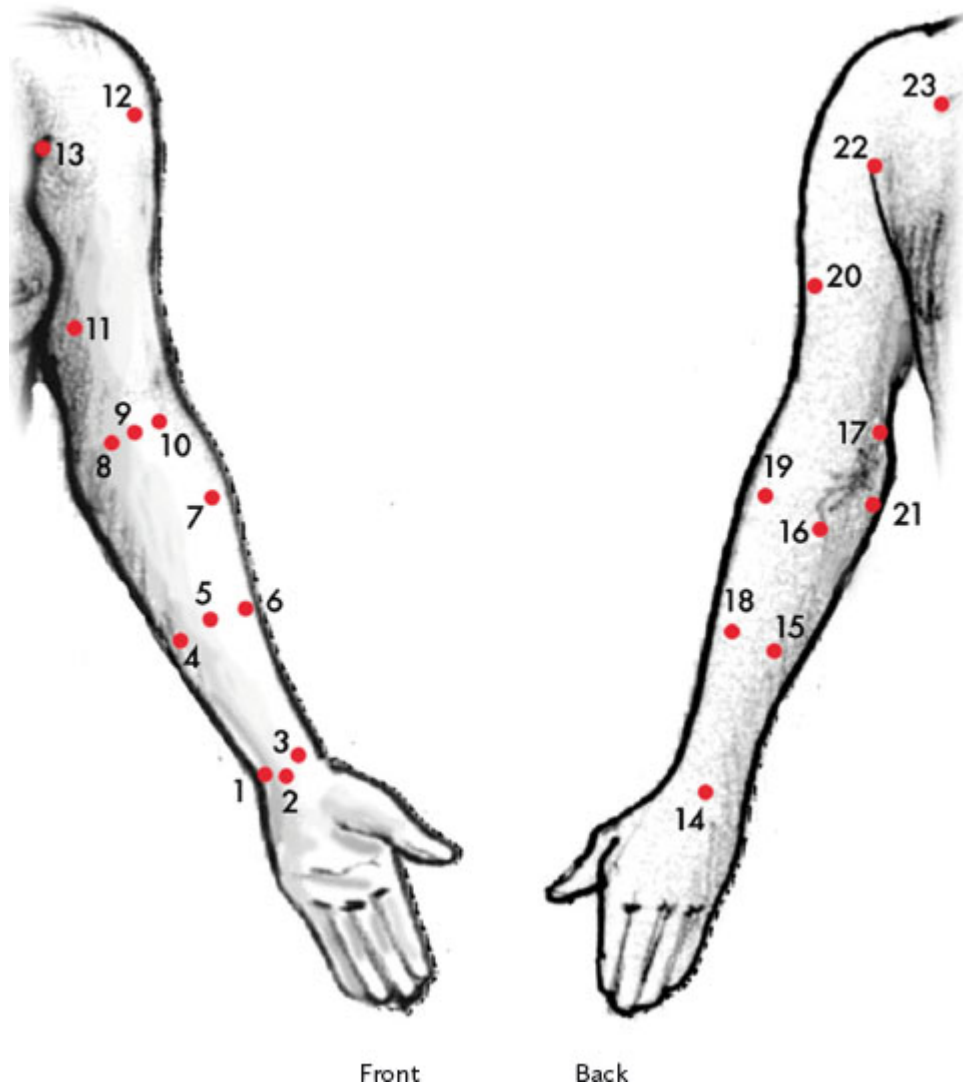
Outside

NOTES:

21. Femoral Wind Gate point

11-16. Circumference of knee

Acupressure Points of the Arms



NOTES:

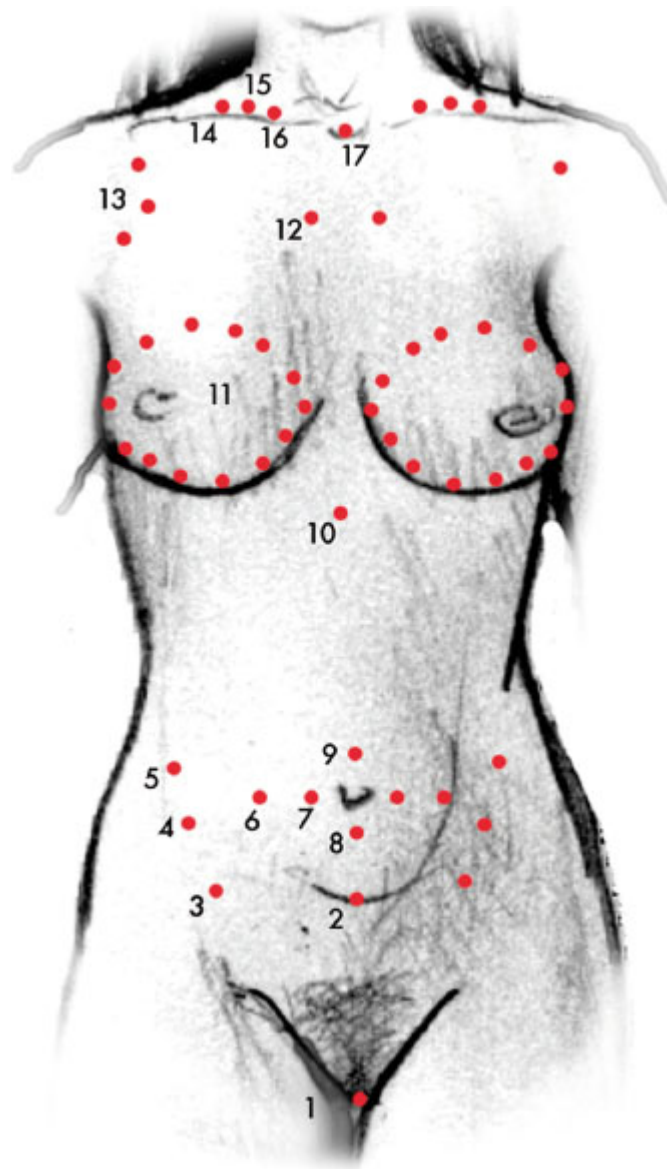
8-10. Inside elbow

11. Brachial Plexus

13. Armpit

17. “Funny bone”

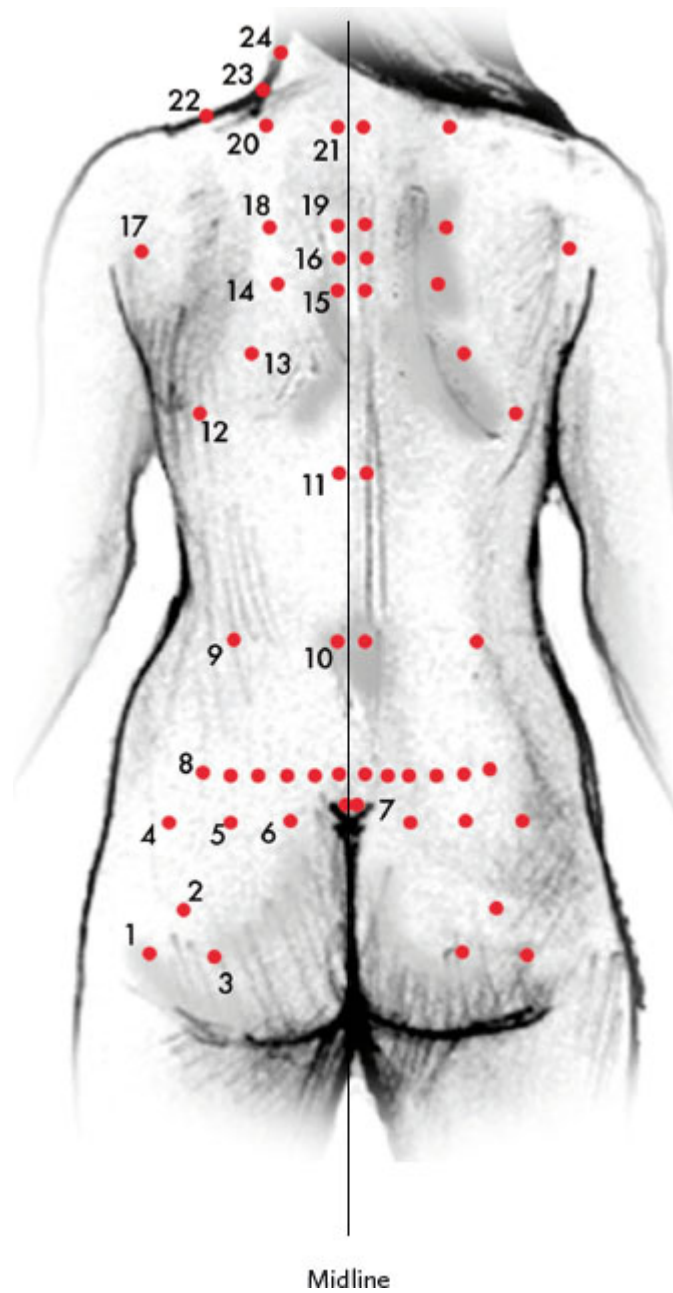
Acupressure Points of the Torso



NOTES:

1. Perineum
2. Dantian (Hara)
- 3-5. Along the psoas muscle, inside of the hip bone
10. Solar plexus
11. The entire perimeter of the breast
13. The outline of the deltoids
17. Sternoclavicular notch

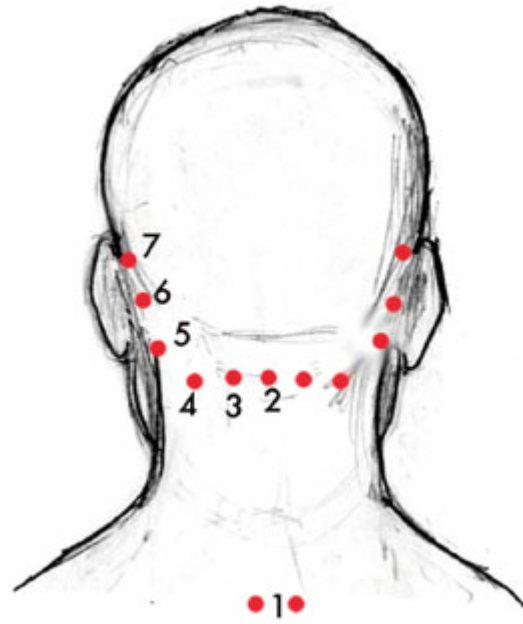
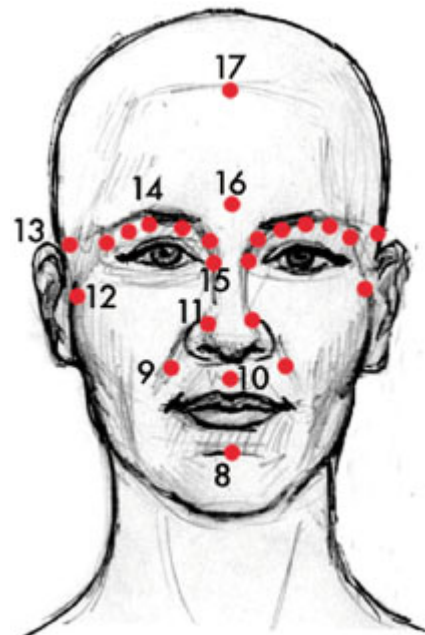
Acupressure Points of the Back

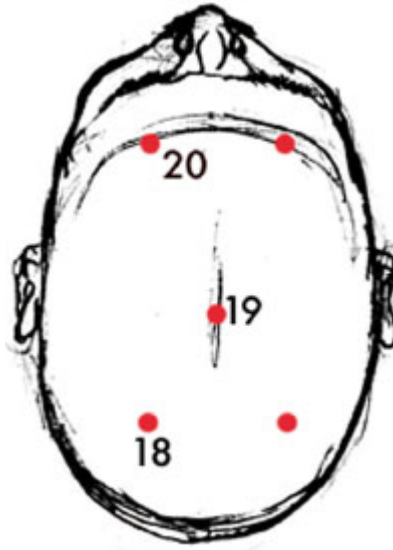


NOTES:

- 1-3. Surrounding head of femur
- 4-6. Below iliac crest
- 7. Sacrum
- 8. Along iliac crest

Acupressure Points of the Head





NOTES:

I. C7 vertebra

2-5. Base of skull

II. Nasal passage

12. TMJ

13. Temple

14. Around eye orbit

16. "Third eye"



CHAPTER 8

Therapeutic Thai Massage



Sen Diagnosis

In the West, diagnosis is generally the domain of the biomedical physician, and massage therapists should tread lightly into this territory. In many places, the word “diagnosis” itself is not permitted in the massage therapy setting. In Thailand, however, massage is a medical discipline and Thai Massage therapists are trained in diagnostic arts.

Sen diagnosis is a combination of experience, observation, and intuition. It is an art that therapists find very difficult until they have a great deal of experience. Always interview your client concerning specific symptoms and ask if a professional diagnosis has already been made. Your powers of observation can guide you in the delivery of an effective massage, but never attempt to diagnose serious conditions without sufficient training. Learning this craft from a book is impossible, so training at a qualified school is imperative. (See Appendix 5 for suggestions.)

THAI HEALERS use a variety of tools for diagnosis — ranging from tongue, iris, and pulse diagnosis to reading the Four Elements and casting the patient’s horoscope. Some traditional Thai healers do not subscribe to any specific system of diagnosis, but rather employ their ability to “see” energy in their clients. Many masters of Thai Massage are able to sense where the client’s body is imbalanced merely by visually scanning or palpating the body, by working the *sen*, or simply by intuition.

Whatever system a Thai therapist uses, their diagnosis inevitably leads them toward an understanding of the imbalances in the individual client. They then design massage routines to assist in bringing back balance. Often, a classic Thai Massage routine such as presented in Chapter 4 can be the ideal way to treat a client. The routine is designed to work all of the 10 main *sen* in a cyclical way, dispelling negative or stagnant energy from the body while promoting and purifying beneficial energy at the same time. However, with clients who present specific conditions, you may wish to add a targeted therapeutic routine into the standard massage. This chapter will help you understand how to design a therapy routine for a client based on the symptoms they exhibit.

Your first step is to evaluate the client's current complaints according to the *sen* that are involved. Using the Thai Massage diagnostic chart in Appendix 3, begin by noting all of the client's breaks and blockages throughout the body. This will help you to determine the main *sen* involved in this client's complaints. Then, assess whether the case is predominantly one that requires heating or cooling therapy (see previous chapter), or if it requires a combination of the two. Remember when doing your diagnosis to avoid language and categories from biomedicine or from other Asian traditions, and to remain wholly within the Thai theoretical framework.

Designing a Therapy Routine

Once you have determined the *sen* that are in need of treatment and what kind of approach is desirable, you can begin to design your therapeutic massage routine. Effective therapy balances concentration on the afflicted area with a concern for the harmony of the entire body. A typical therapy routine is a 30-minute treatment of a particular *sen* or multiple *sen*, but the timeframe may vary depending on the needs and condition of the client. A therapy routine is always incorporated into a classic Thai Massage routine in

order to ensure that the affected areas are dealt with within the context of a balancing treatment for the entire body. The transition between full body massage and therapeutic routine should be seamless. The client should never know where one begins and the other leaves off. It is recommended that you schedule at least two hours for a therapeutic massage to ensure that you have enough time to provide an hour-and-a-half classic routine and still be able to spend a good 30 minutes on the therapy.

Where you choose to insert the therapy routine into the classic routine is up to you, and will depend on many factors. The therapy should be incorporated in such a way as to integrate it into the flow of the massage, while requiring the least amount of adjustment on the part of the client or the therapist. Wherever it is inserted, it is important that the 30-minute therapy routine be performed without interruption, so it should not be mixed with classic routine steps. This is to ensure the integrity of the energy work. If you are stimulating a particular *sen*, and then start working with other parts of the body, you can inadvertently reverse the work you are performing.

One of the best solutions is to insert the therapy routine at the point in the massage where you are going to ask your client to turn over onto her stomach or side after Step 77. Before she makes this adjustment, begin the therapy routine on the front side of the body. Then, ask her to turn. Continue the therapy routine on the back side of the body. When the therapy routine has been completed, return to Step 78 and continue with the regular flow of the classic routine.

During the therapy routine, you will follow the *sen* or multiple *sen* being worked from their origin at the navel to their endpoints and back again. You will do this with thumb presses, or whatever method of pressure is most appropriate, stopping along the way to apply acupressure to points along the *sen* in the order that they are encountered. Your therapy routine will also incorporate stretches and yogic postures from the classic routine in order to additionally stimulate the *sen* being targeted. For example, a therapy routine on the Itha and Pingala lines will incorporate acupressure to the legs, back,

neck, and face, as well as hamstring stretches, quadriceps stretches, and forward bends, because these all lie along the *sen* being treated. See the chart below for a quick reference, and see the chart in Chapter 6 for a detailed list of each step in the classic routine and the *sen* it addresses.

In the interest of maintaining the harmony of the whole body, it is important to remember that therapy routines are always performed symmetrically. Even if the injury or chronic condition occurs only on one side of the body, the same therapy routine is to be given to both sides of the body in order to preserve the balance of energy throughout the *sen*, and to address issues of “compensation” that may occur as the other side of the client’s body tries to make up for the injured side. Of course, the intention you bring to your work may be different on each side. For example, you may wish to concentrate on building up the energy one side while trying to dissipate stagnation on the other.

There are several sample routines on the following pages to use as a reference. For convenience and further information, they contain numerical references to the steps presented in Part 2 of this book. When working with *sen* in a therapy routine, it is important that you remember to work the lines from their beginning at the navel to their termination at the extremities. When referring to the steps listed on the following pages, you will often have to reverse the order of the instructions given earlier in the book in order to flow in the desired direction.

Quick Reference: Correlations Between Sen and Treatment

SEN AFFECTED	SUGGESTED FULL-BODY STRETCHES	SUGGESTED ACUPRESSURE
Itha & Pingala	Forward bends, hamstring stretches, plow pose	Knee, back, neck, head, and face
Kalatharee	Spinal twists, hip-openers such as hip adduction stretch, hip abduction stretch, “figure 4” stretch, arm stretches	Legs and arms, back
Sahatsarangsi	Stretches for iliopsoas, hips, cobra pose	Legs, face

& Tawaree	and other back bends	
Sumana	Cobras and other back bends, spinal twist, all forward bends	Chest and throat, back
Lawusang & Ulanga	Neck stretches, cobra and other back bends	Neck and ears
Nantakawat	Spinal twists, forward bends	Stomach, abdomen
Kitcha	Gentle abdominal compressions, spinal	Stomach, abdomen, hot compress on perineum

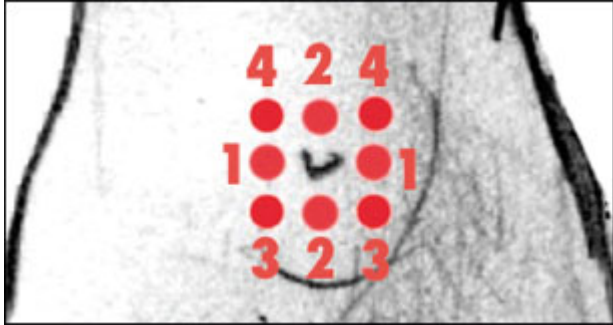
Sample Therapy Routines

Therapy Routine for Itha and Pingala

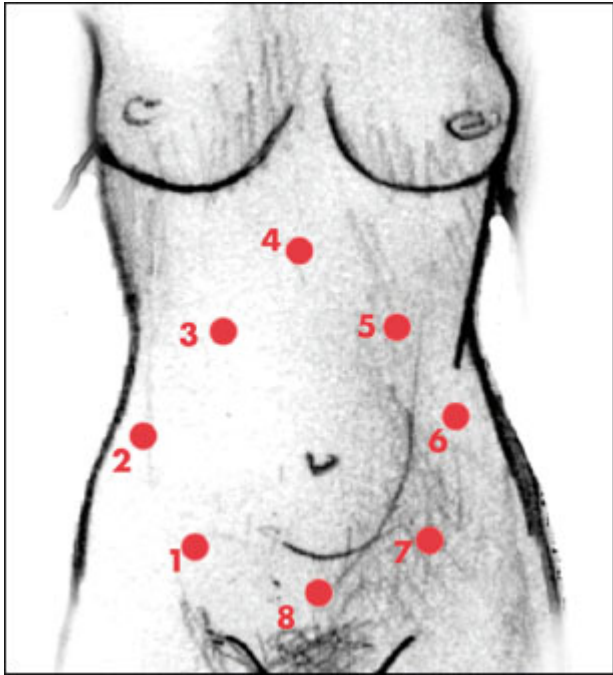
Palm Circles on Stomach (Step 55)



The Itha and Pingala sen, like all the Thai sen, begin at the navel. Since we will be following the course of the *sen* through the body, we begin here with palm circles on the abdomen.



Thumb Press Navel Points (Step 57)



Palm Press Stomach Points (Step 56)

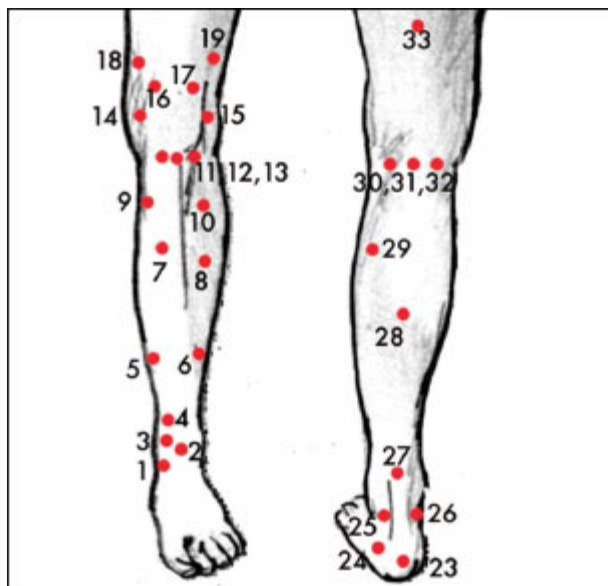
Use any or all of the three options presented in Step 56.

Work Lines ol and i3



Beginning with the appropriate side (left for Itha, right for Pingala), start this step with a stretch and palm press. Next, thumb press line ol from the abdomen to the feet. Note that because you are working from the navel to the extremities, the direction is reversed from that of the classic routine.

When you reach the feet, turn and work your way up the back of the leg along line i3. You might find the side-lying position to be the most convenient for this step. Finish with palm press and stretch.



Acupressure of Leg

Refer to the acupressure atlas and work with the following points: Legs 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 31.



Foot Presses on Line i3 (Steps 19, 20, 22)

Still only working on one side of the body, press into **i3** with feet and heels with the Paddleboat and other steps. (These can also be performed from the side-lying position.)



Hamstring Stretches (Steps 26, 32, 62, 63)

Do some or all of the hamstring stretches from the classic routine.



Plow (Step 65)

This pose engages the Itha and Pingala lines from the heels to the neck.



Forearm Roll and Elbow Press Line i3 (Steps 83-84)

Acupressure of Hip (Side Position 4)



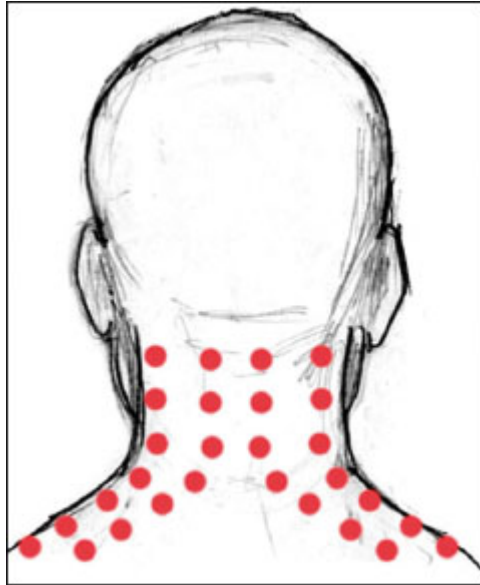
If you haven't already, switch your client to the side position shown in Chapter 5. From this position, press the acupuncture points of the appropriate hip with thumb or elbow presses. Refer to the acupuncture atlas and work with the following points: Back 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.



Back Lines (Side Position 5)

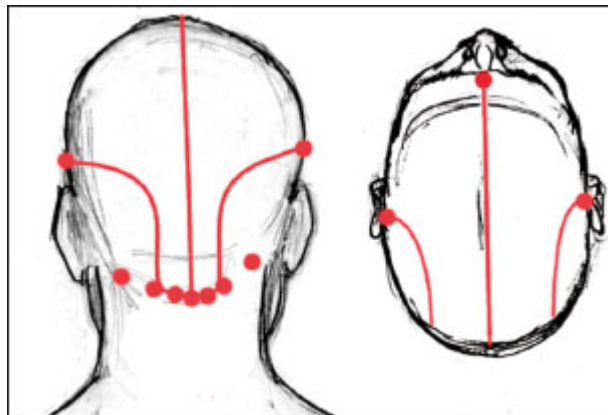
With the client still in the side-lying position, continue to work on one side of the body, pressing along Back Line 1. Work from the lower back to the trapezius muscle.

Then, perform acupuncture for the back. Refer to the acupuncture atlas and work with the following points: Back 8, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19, 21.



Trapezius and Neck (Step 103)

Working only on one side, press from the shoulder up to the neck.



Sen and Acupressure of Head (Step 104)

Follow the Itha or the Pingala, whichever one you are working with, up to the temple, and over the crown to the nostril. Refer back to the acupressure atlas and work with the following points: Head 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 16, 17, 20.



Face Routine and Acupressure (Steps 105-106)

Refer to the acupressure atlas and work with the following points: Head 10, 11, 16, 17.

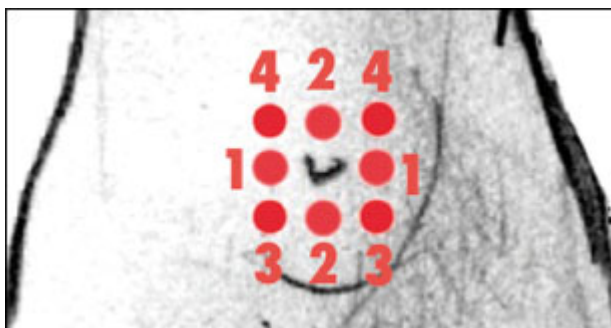
Having followed the Itha or the Pingala from its origin to its terminus, reverse these steps to return to the navel. Then, repeat for the other side.

Therapy Routine for Kalatharee

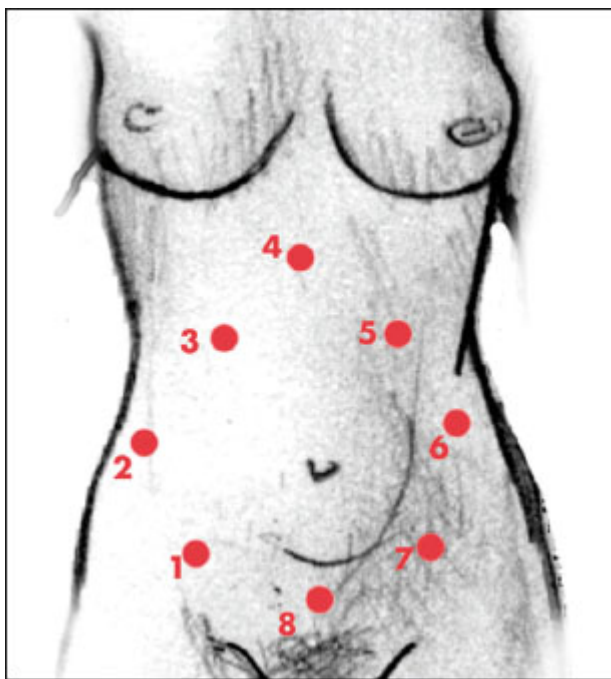


Palm Circles on Stomach (Step 55)

Begin at the navel with a palm circle and palm press.



Thumb Press Navel Points (Step 57)



Palm Press Stomach Points (Step 56)

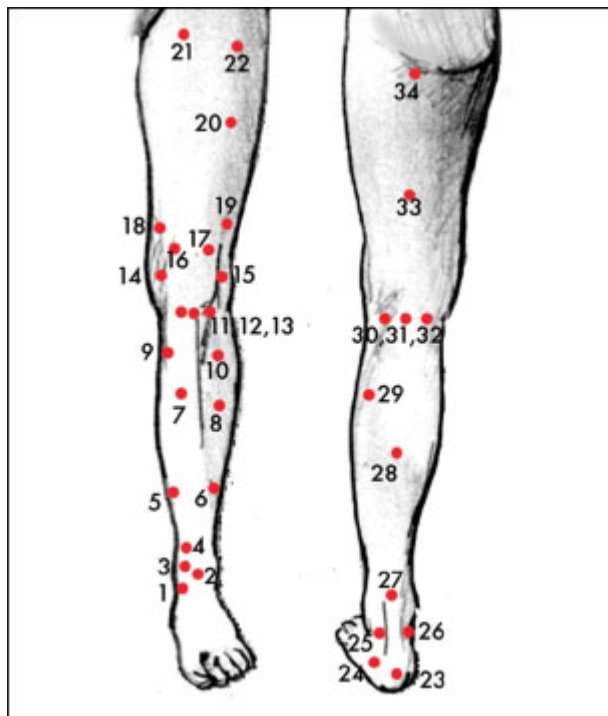
Use any or all of the three options presented in Step 56.



Work *Sen i2* and *o3*

Beginning with the appropriate side (left for female, right for male), start this step with a stretch and palm press. Next, thumb press line **i2** from the abdomen to the feet. Note that because you are working from the navel to the extremities, the direction is reversed from that of the classic routine.

Next, begin again at the hip and thumb press line **o3** down to the feet. Finish with palm press and stretch.



Acupressure of Leg

Refer to the acupressure atlas and work with the following points: Legs 1, 3, 5, 9, 8, 18, 19, 20, 22 Back 1, 2, 3



Foot Routine (Steps 2-7)

Still only working on one side, perform these steps for the foot.



Figure Four Hip Stretches (Steps 17-18)



Lateral Hip Stretch (Step 27)



Abduction of Hip (Step 33)



Spinal Twist (Step 28)

Quadriceps and Iliopsoas Stretch (Step 29)



Adduction of Hip (Step 34)



Palm Circles on Stomach (Step 55)



Chest Routine (Steps 51-54)



Reverse the order of the steps, so that you are working from the stomach up the chest to the pectoral muscles. Refer to the acupressure atlas and work with the following point: Torso **i3**.

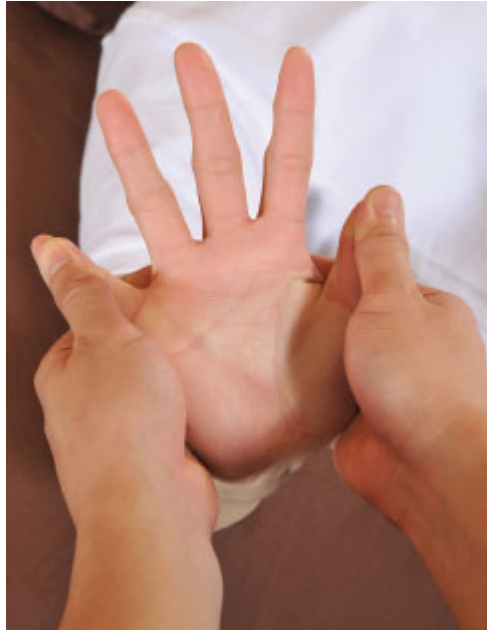
Work Arm *Sen* (Steps 40-41)



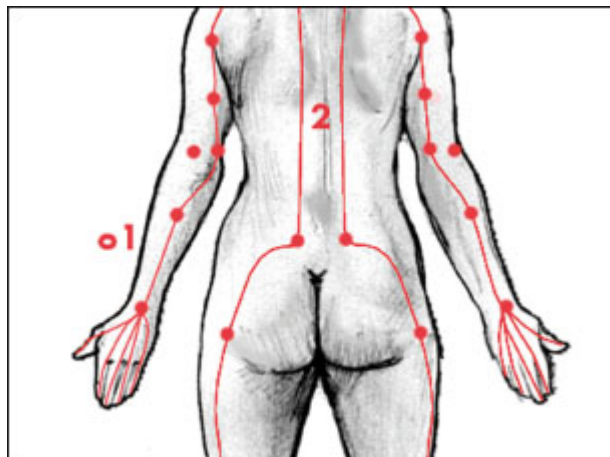
Continuing with the appropriate side, start and finish this step with a stretch and palm press. Next, thumb press the inner arm lines from the abdomen to the hands. Next, begin again at the shoulder and press the outer arm line. Finish with palm press and stretch.

Refer to the acupressure atlas and work with the following points: Arms 2, 5, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23.

Hand Routine and Acupressure (Steps 36-39)



Back Line 2



This step and the next can best be performed with the client in the side-lying position. Walk your thumbs up and down Back Line 2 on the side you are working.

Refer to the acupressure atlas and work with the following points: Back 13, 14, 18, 20, 23.

Stretches for Shoulder and Arm (Side variation Steps 6-10)



Having followed the Kalatharee from its origin to its terminus, reverse these steps to return to the navel. Then, repeat for the other side.

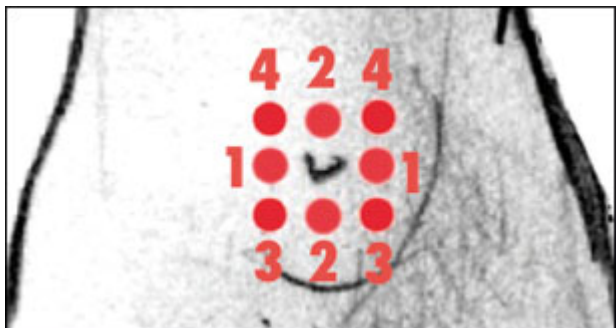
Therapy Routine for Sahatsarangsi and Tawaree

Palm Circles on Stomach (Step 55)

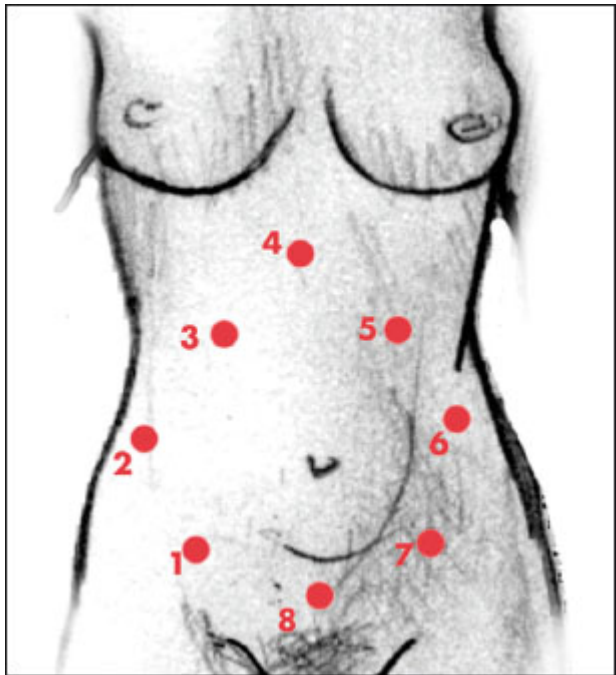


Begin at the navel with a palm circle and palm press.

Thumb Press Navel Points (Step 57)



Palm Press Stomach Points (Step 56)



(Use any or all of the three options in Step 56.)

Work *Sen* i1 and o2



Beginning with the appropriate side (left for female, right for male), start this step with a stretch and palm press. Next, thumb press line **i1** from the abdomen to the foot. Note that because you are working from the navel to the extremities, the direction is reversed from that of the classic routine. Next, begin again at the hip and thumb press line **o2** down to the feet. Finish with palm press and stretch. Refer to the acupressure atlas and work with the following points: Legs 3, 29.

Psoas Press (Step 16 Variation, Step 58)



Press with a bladed hand along the iliopsoas muscle.

Hip Stretch (Step 25)



Quadriceps Stretch and Psoas Press (Step 29 and variation)



Hip Adduction (Step 34)



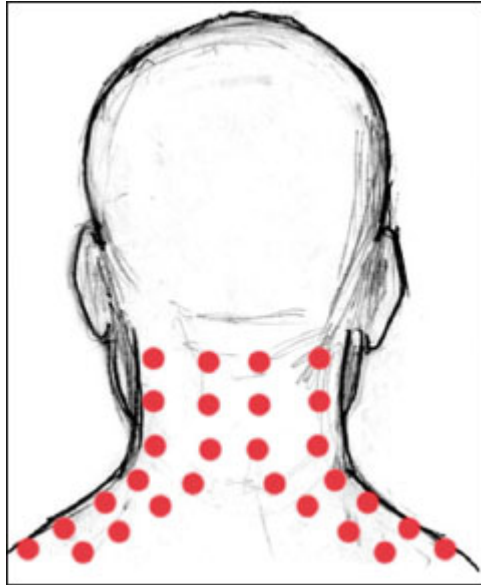
Chest Routine (Steps 51-55)

Reverse the order of these steps so that you are working from the lower abdomen up to the pectoral muscles.

Also with thumb presses, follow the course of the Sahatsarangsi or Tawaree up the chest from the abdomen to the neck. Refer to the acupressure atlas and work with the following point: Torso 12.



Neck Lines and Trapezius (Steps 101, 103)



Head and Face Routine (Steps 104-106)



Back Bends (Steps 98, 99, and Side-lying Variations)



Back bends engage the entire front of the body and activate these *sen*.

Having followed the Sahatsarangsi or Tawaree from its origin to its terminus, reverse these steps to return to the navel. Then, repeat for the other side.

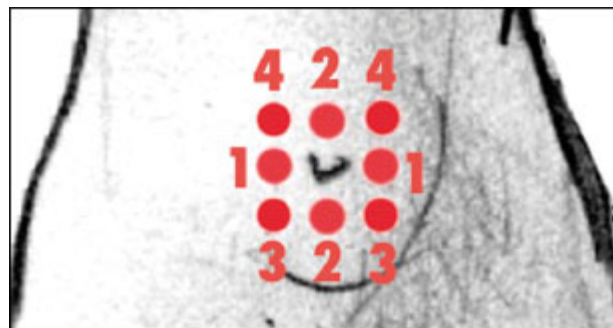
Therapy Routine for Sumana

Palm Circles on Stomach (Step 55)



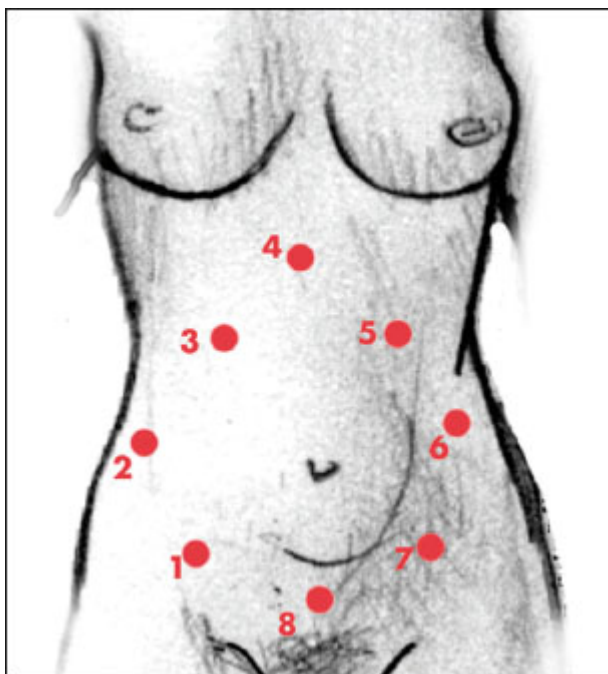
Begin at the navel with a palm circle and palm press.

Thumb Press Navel Points (Step 57)



Palm Press Stomach Points (Step 56)

Use any or all of the three options in Step 56.



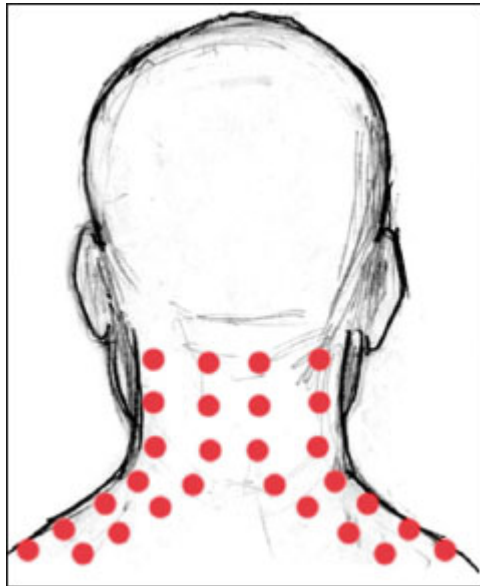
Chest Routine (Steps 51-54)

Reverse the order of these steps, so that you are working from the lower abdomen up to the pectoral muscles.

Refer to the acupressure atlas and work with the following points: Torso 10, 16, 17.

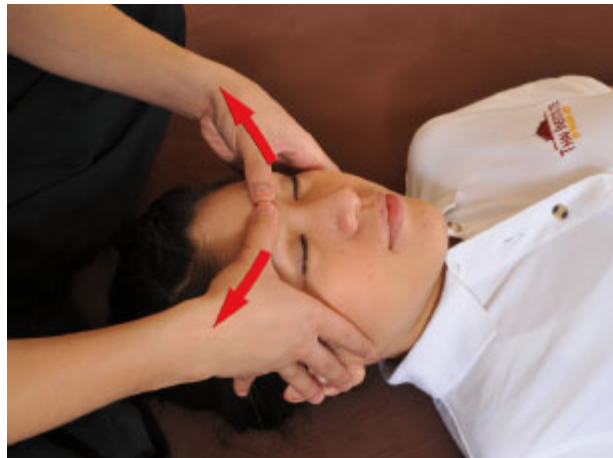


Neck Lines and Trapezius Routine (Steps 101, 103)



Head and Face Routine (Step 105)

Refer to the acupressure atlas and work with the following point: Head 8, 16, 17, 19.



Crown (Step 106)



Abdominal Compression (Step 61)



Spinal Twist (Step 28 or 75)



Forward Bends (Steps 65-72)



Back Bends (Steps 98, 99, and Side-Lying Variations)

Back bends engage the entire front of the body and activate this *sen*.



Having followed the Sumana from its origin to its terminus, reverse these steps to return to the navel.

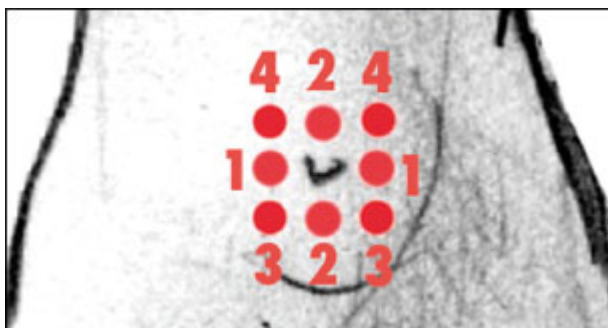
Therapy Routine for Lawusang and Ulanga

Palm Circles on Stomach (Step 55)



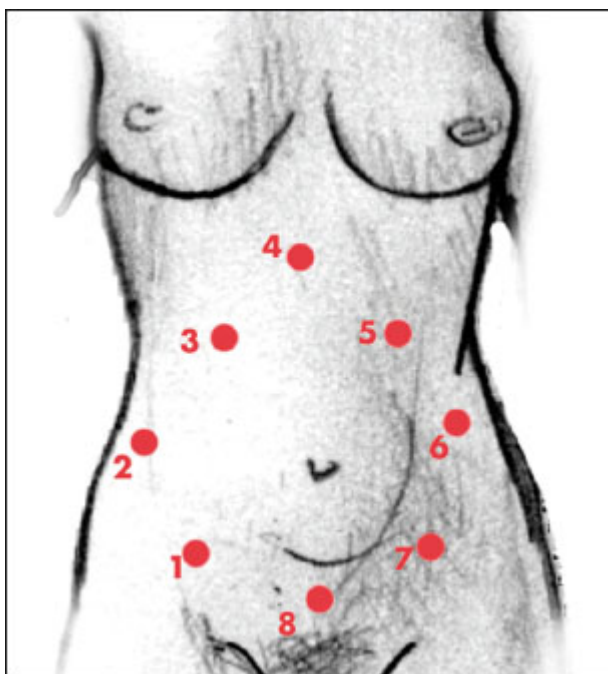
Begin at the navel with a palm circle and palm press.

Thumb Press Navel Points (Step 57)



Palm Press Stomach Points (Step 56)

Use any or all of the three options in Step 56.



Chest Routine (Steps 51-54)

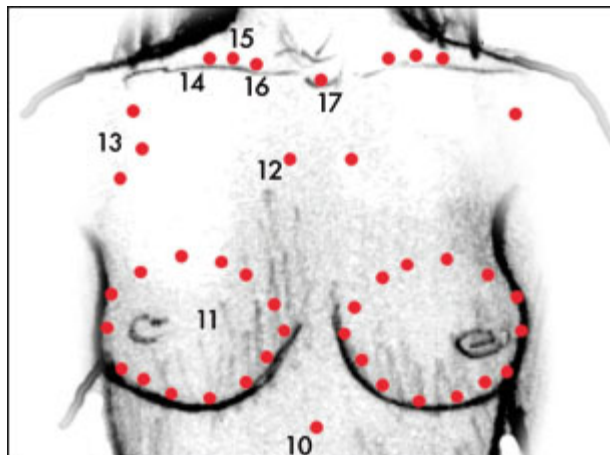
Reverse the order of these steps, so that you are working from the lower abdomen up to the pectoral muscles. For these sen, you can work on both sides of the body at the same time.



Acupressure on Thoracic Region

Also with thumb presses, follow the line of the Lawusang and Ulanga *sen* from the navel to the neck. (Skipping over the breasts if this is not appropriate.)

Refer to the acupressure atlas and work with the following points: Torso 11, 12, 14, 15, 16.



Head and Face Routine (Step 105)

Refer to the acupressure atlas and work with the following points: Head 5, 12, 13.



Neck Stretch (Seated Position 6, 7)

Back Bends (Steps 98, 99, and Side-lying Variations)

Back bends engage the entire front of the body, and activate these *sen*.



Crown and Ear Vacuum (Steps 106-107)

The ear vacuum is particularly important for this *sen*.



Having followed Lawusang and Ulanga from their origin to their terminus, reverse these steps to return to the navel.



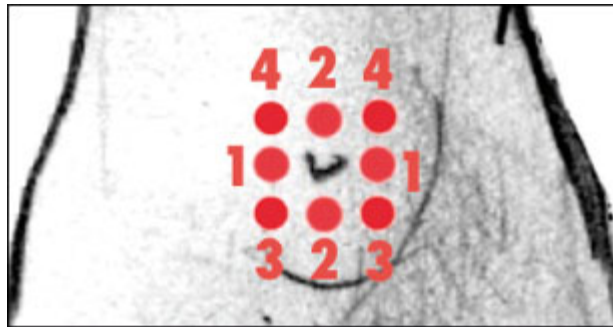
Therapy Routine for Nantakawat

Palm Circles on Stomach (Step 55)

Begin at the navel with a palm circle and palm press.

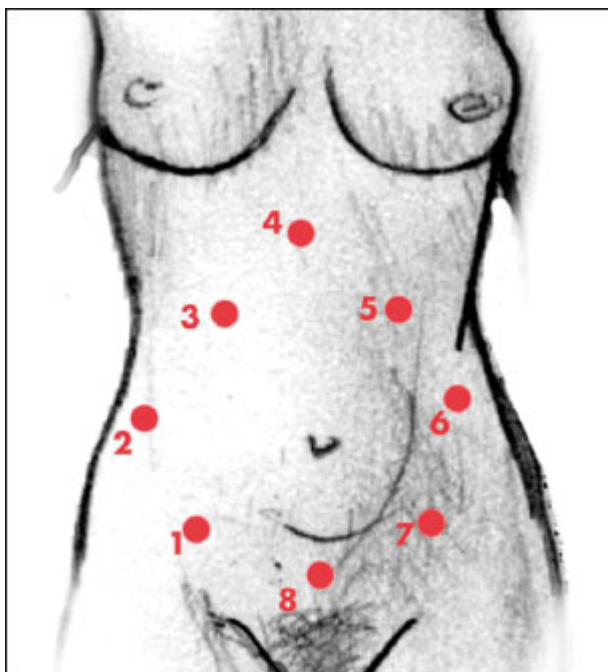


Thumb Press Navel Points (Step 57)



Palm Press Stomach Points (Step 56)

Use any or all of the three options presented in Step 56.



**Gentle Back Stretch with
Abdominal Compression (Step 61)**



Spinal Twist (Step 28)

Repeat for both sides.



Forward Bends (Steps 65-72)

Forward bends help by compressing the abdomen and stretching the lower back. If your client wishes to perform back bends as well, this is beneficial, however you should place the client in the side-lying position so as not to put pressure on the abdominal region.



Finish by repeating abdominal steps.

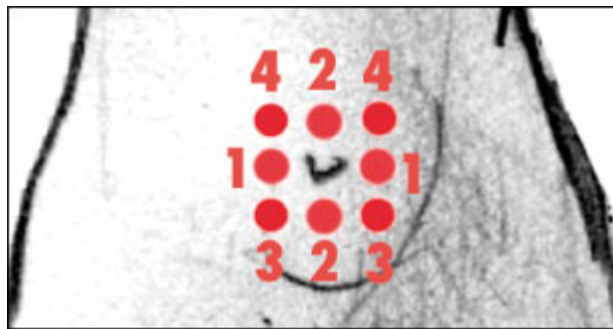
Therapy Routine for Kitcha

Palm Circles on Stomach (Step 55)



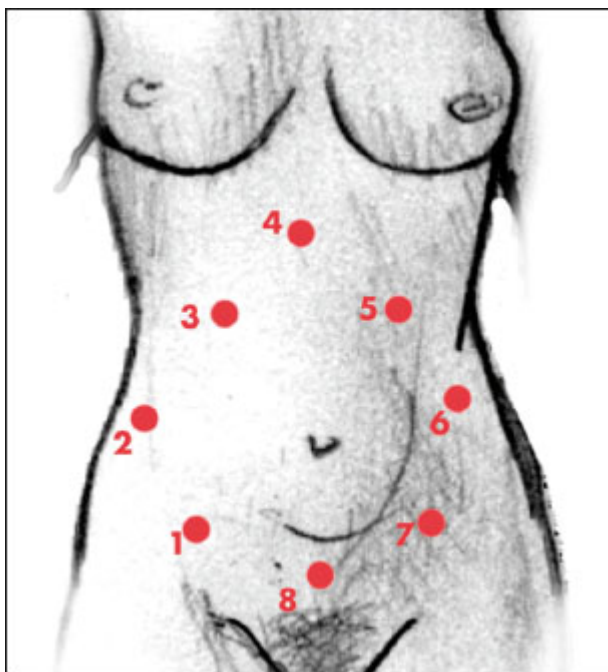
Begin at the navel with a palm circle and palm press.

Thumb Press Navel Points (Step 57)



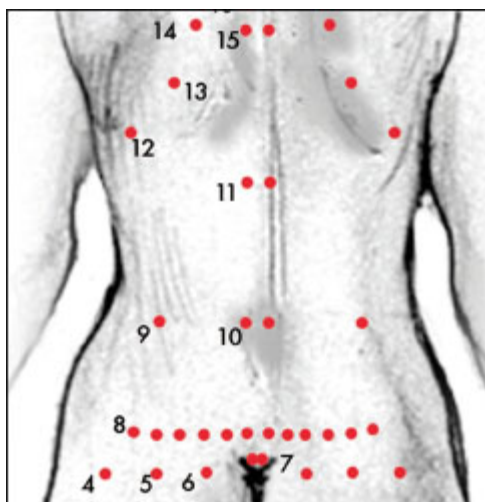
Palm Press Stomach Points (Step 56)

(Use any of all of the three options presented in Step 56.)



Acupressure for Lower Back

Refer to the acupressure atlas and work with the following points: Back 8, 9, 10, 11.



Gentle Back Stretch with



Abdominal Compression (Step 61)

Spinal Twist (Step 28)

Repeat for both sides.



Finish by repeating abdominal steps.



CHAPTER 9

Thai Herbs and Massage



Herbal Compress Massage

Herbs are an everyday part of Thai life, and are used in Traditional Thai Medicine for their healing effects on the body, mind, and energy. In my book, *A Thai Herbal: Traditional Recipes for Health and Harmony*, I discuss the holistic worldview of the Thai herbalist and the role of herbs in Traditional Thai Medicine.⁸ Along with massage and spiritual practice, herbalism is one of the three main branches of Thai Traditional Medicine.

AS I WILL DISCUSS in this chapter, there is significant overlap between Thai herbalism and massage, and no Thai Massage clinic in Thailand will go without some of the essentials of herbal healing. One of the most unique and interesting ways in which these two disciplines dovetail is in the practice of herbal compress massage. This is a specialized form of Thai Massage that is becoming popular in the West as well. An herbal massage incorporates hot herbal compresses into the Traditional Thai Massage discussed throughout this book. Herbal compresses are heated in an herbal steamer (shown above), and the warm bundles are applied directly to the skin or through the client's clothing during a massage session.

Thai medicine uses hot compresses for stiff, sore, or pulled muscles and ligaments, back pain, arthritis, chronic pain, injuries, indigestion, skin diseases, migraines, chronic stress, anxiety, and many other conditions. The blend of hot and aromatic Thai herbs used in these compresses

simultaneously has a relaxing and invigorating effect on the body and mind, soothing sore and over-worked muscles while giving a boost for the body's energy level.

Herbal compress therapy is an integral part of the “hot therapy” discussed in Chapter 7. While strong pressure may be called for in the case of blocked sen, some clients may be too sensitive to receive massage or acupressure therapy directly. The herbal compress can be a useful way to apply hot pressure along sen, acupressure points, and joints that could not otherwise be massaged. It is considered to be as effective a method of delivering hot pressure as acupressure — if not more so. Simply apply the compress to the site (as warm as the client can stand without burning the skin), and press gently with your palm.

Note that clients with arthritis or chronic pain can have a very relaxing and invigorating experience with herbal compresses, without the use of any stretches at all. Hot compresses provide marked relief of joint stiffness, and can also help such clients to be able to perform stretches that would otherwise be impossible. As they contain natural antiinflammatories, the compresses are also an integral part of natural pain management.

In addition to therapy routines, hot compresses can be used in conjunction with the classic routine as well. Herbal compress massage is a relaxing way to soothe a client after the regular session is finished. Typically, this will add on 20-30 minutes to the massage routine. Once the classic routine is completed, the entire body will be pressed with hot compresses to ease any residual tension in the muscles.



A small traditional medicine pharmacy near Wat Pho temple, Bangkok, sells compresses, balms, and other herbal remedies.

You can also use the compresses during the course of the classic routine, without interrupting the flow of the massage. You can use herbal compresses on the joints in order to soften and loosen the limbs and increase mobility before major stretching. Also use the compresses during the abdominal massage to encourage digestion and stimulate the major organs. Apply the hot compresses to the skin directly or through the client's massage clothes, and allow them to warm the client's body, penetrating and dissipating any tension before moving on to deep acupressure work.

Other ideas include using the compresses as heated pillows, or as props for the client's neck, head, or the backs of the knees. You may also wish to leave compresses at important acupressure points such as the navel or the base of the skull in order to stimulate the energy flow throughout the body while you continue with your work. Applying compresses to palms or soles of the feet can also have the same effect. Experiment with different locations on the body, but be sure to avoid the eyes and other areas that may be sensitive.

Hot-compress massage is also an excellent option for post-partum clients. Most parts of the body — including the limbs, hands, and feet — can be pressed with herbal compress in order to relax the client and impart the benefits of the herbs. The stomach and lower abdominal areas should not be pressed without adequate training, however.

While the herbs in the compress are well known as topical analgesics and anti-inflammatories in Traditional Thai Medicine, the aromatherapy effects of the herbs used in the compresses should not be undervalued. Many of these herbs are said to have a balancing effect on the mind and emotions, and to relieve stress, anxiety, and negative thoughts. Most of the herbs also possess properties that clear out congestion of the lungs and sinuses, thus application of hot compresses to the chest and throat can help to relieve cold and flu symptoms. Many also have a healing and cleansing effect on the skin. As always, though, be sure that you have adequate knowledge of the herbs being used, and a full understanding of their potential side effects with regards to any medical condition. (See *A Thai Herbal* for more details.)

One last use of herbal compresses that should be mentioned is the application of cold compresses. Cold compresses should be first cooked for about 30 minutes to release the beneficial qualities of the herbs, and then frozen or iced. The cold compresses can then be applied to clients with muscle strains, tendon or ligament sprains, contusions, bruises, and more severe injuries requiring “cold therapy” (see Chapter 7). Cold compresses help to reduce swelling and pain and can promote dissipation of pooled stagnant energy due to broken *sen*. Cold compresses should be applied only to the site of the injury and should be monitored while the practitioner massages other areas of the body.

Recipes for Herbal Compresses

Lay out three thin muslin or cotton cloths in front of you. Mix the ingredients in a bowl. Place a fist-sized pile on each cloth, and wrap tightly to make small bundles. Place bundles in the steamer and cook at 225-250°F (110-120°C) for about 15 minutes. Then, adjust temperature to 200°F (95°C). Remove one by one. Allow to cool sufficiently before using with client. (Test each bundle on your forearm before using). Apply compresses to client's skin with moderate pressure. When each compress has cooled, place it back in the steamer to re-heat. Compresses may be reused for up to 6-8 hours of total cooking time before being discarded, but always use fresh herbs for each client and for each session.



A Thai herbal compress is wrapped in muslin cloth in such a way that a convenient handle is made from the cloth.

The two blends I present here include one recipe from the Shivagakomarpaj Lineage, and one from Wat Po. These are not, however, the

only recipes used in Thailand. Most Thai Massage therapists have a favorite recipe they use on a regular basis, and they may add specific herbs into their compresses according to the therapeutic needs of individual clients. Specialized herbs may be added, for example, to treat arthritis, cold, flu, fever, skin disease, or other conditions. (For more information on custom herbal blends for individual clients, please consult *A Thai Herbal*, which discusses this and other aspects of traditional Thai herbal medicine in detail).

Two Classic Compress Recipes

SHIVAGAKOMARPAJ BLEND: This recipe is used by many providers in the Chiang Mai area, and is taught by the Old Medicine Hospital. Begin with a handful of dried cassumunar ginger (*Zingiber cassumunar*) for each compress. Add a handful of dried kaffir lime (*Citrus hystix*) leaves and rind, eucalyptus leaves (*Eucalyptus globulus*), and cinnamon leaves (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*) combined. Finish each compress with a liberal sprinkle of natural camphor crystals (*Cinnamomum camphora*).

WAT PO BLEND: This recipe comes from the Wat Po school in Bangkok. Start with a fistful of dried cassumunar ginger for each compress. Add another handful of lemongrass (*Cymbopogon citratus*) and kaffir lime leaves combined. Finish each compress with a liberal sprinkle of camphor crystals.

NOTE: Common ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) may be substituted for cassumunar (Thai: plai), which may be difficult to purchase in the West, but try to avoid other substitutions. Be sure to use natural camphor, as artificial substitutes may be toxic. Also, note that essential oils are not suitable for compresses since they dissipate quickly in the steamer. For those who live in locales where these Thai herbs are hard to find, high quality Thai herbs are available online at www.thai-herbs.com.)

Other Herbs for Compresses

The following herbs are other ingredients also frequently used in Thai compresses. Experiment with adding these herbs into the traditional recipes above. (More information on the properties of each of these plants is available in *A Thai Herbal*.)

CALAMUS (*Acorus calamus*)

CAYENNE OIL (*Capsicum frutescens*)

CLOVES (*Syzygium aromaticum*)

GARLIC (*Allium sativum*)

JASMINE (*Jasminum officinale*, others)

LEMON RIND (*Citrus limonum*)

MANDARIN ORANGE RIND (*Citrus reticulata*)

SEA SALT

SOAP NUT (*Sapindus rarak*)

TAMARIND (*Tamarindus indica*)

TURMERIC (*Curcuma longa*)

ZEDOARY (*Curcuma zedoaria*)

ZERUMBET GINGER (*Zingiber zerumbet*)

Herbal Balms and Other Topical Applications

Even if no hot compresses are used, in Thailand Thai Massage is often followed by the application of an herbal balm or liniment to soothe and relax the muscles. Many clinics offer homemade preparations, which may come in varying strengths and aromas. These topical applications are believed to have the effect of stimulating circulation to the muscles, to warm the body, and to help with clearing any remnants of negative energy. Also, many of these preparations include herbs with analgesic and anti-inflammatory, which can lessen pain or soreness.

Tiger Balm™ is often the most convenient choice in the West, where this product is readily available in groceries and drugstores. However, the adventurous Thai Massage therapist may also wish to experiment with making his or her own herbal balm. With this individual in mind, I offer the following recipe. You may wish to experiment with different essential oils in order to create custom blends. Almost any aromatic or spicy herb can be used topically to soothe sore muscles. Refer to my book, *A Thai Herbal*, for a complete list of Thai herbs in these categories.

Homemade Massage Balm

- 60 ml. extra-virgin olive oil or coconut oil
- 15 grams beeswax
- essential oil of peppermint
- essential oil of eucalyptus
- essential oil of camphor
- essential oil of cinnamon
- essential oil of clove

Heat oil and beeswax in a double-boiler over low heat. Stir until wax is melted. Remove from heat. Add the desired amount of each essential oil, and pour into small glass or metal containers to cool.

Note that commercial balms are available in several strengths, and that you may adjust the quantities of essential oils in this recipe to achieve different strengths. This balm may also be made using Vaseline™ or other petroleum jelly as a base for a consistency closer to Tiger Balm™.

Herbal Sauna and Other Methods of Inhalation Therapy

Every massage clinic in Chiang Mai worth its salt has a sauna or steam bath for clients to use after receiving Thai Massage. The purposes of the sauna include relaxing the body after the bodywork and to clear out negative or congested energy. Sweating is one of the body's natural detoxification methods, and Thais have traditionally used herbs in the sauna to assist in this process. Typically, recipes for the Thai sauna are similar to the recipes for herbal compresses, and to get started you can use the recipes above. Many different aromatic herbs may be added to achieve particular purposes or to address particular needs.



An herbal bath at a spa in Bangkok.

(See *A Thai Herbal* for more information and recipes for herbal inhalation.)

The Thai sauna can range from a tile-walled steam chamber to a simple box made with sheet metal or plastic. The steam can be pumped in through a complex system of pipes, or can be delivered simply by placing an herbal steamer with an open lid under the client's seat. Whichever method you use, the Thai herbal sauna is an experience your clients will quickly learn to love. It also can be an invaluable way for the therapist to relax and recharge between massages.

Unlike on the case of herbal compresses, essential oils can be used in the sauna or steam bath to substitute for difficult to find or expensive Thai herbs. Essential oils such as eucalyptus, lemongrass, camphor, ginger, and cinnamon leaf can also be used in the bathtub for a relaxing soak after a Thai Massage session, added to simmering water to administer inhalation therapy, and diffused to impart their aroma to the massage therapy space. Whatever method you choose, have fun experimenting with Thai herbs and adding them into your massage practice!

Appendices

Appendix 1: Wai Khru



**Shivagakomarpaj Lineage “Wai Khru”
(Ceremony Honoring the Teacher)
Dedicated to Jivaka Komarabhacca,
Founder of Thai Medicine**

ไหว้ครู

**บทนมัสการพระชีวกโกมารภัจจ์
(ผู้ค้นพบการแพทย์แผนไทย)**

โอม นะโม ชิวะโก สิระสา
อะหัง กรุณิโก สัพพะสัตตตานัง
โอสถะ ทิพพะมันตัง ปะภาโส
สุริยาจันทัง โกมารภัจโธ
ปะภาเสสิ วันทามิ ปิณฑิโต
สุเมธะโส อะโรคา สุมะนาโหม
(3 จบ)

ปิโยทเว มะนุสสานัง ปิโยพรหมมา
นะมุตตะโม ปิโยนาคะ สุปันนัง ปิณินทริยัง
นะมามีหัง นะโมพุทธาเย นะวันนะเวียน
นะสะถิต นะเสถียน เอหิมามา นะเวียนนะวะ
นะไปทางเวียน นะเวียนมาทาทุ เอหิมามา
ปียังมะมะ นะโมพุทธาเย
(1 จบ)

นะอะ นะวะ โรคา พยาธิ วินัสสันติ
(3 จบ)

สาธ โน กันเต
(กราบ)

อาจารย์ เจ้าหน้าที่ ผู้ฝึกงาน และนักเรียน ถวายสังฆทาน

Pronunciation Guide

Ohm-Nā-Mo / Chi-Va-Ko / Si-Ra-Sāā /
Ar-Hāng / Ka-Rū-Nī-Ko / Shap-Phā-Sat-Ta-Nang
Oh-Sa-Tā / Tip-Phā-Man-Tang / Pa-Pha-Sō /
Su-Ri-Ya-Jan-Thung / Ko-Ma-Ra-Phāt-Toe
Pa-Ka-Say-Si / Won-Ta-Mi / Phan-Tj-Toe /
Su-May-Ihā-So / Ah-Rō-Kaa / Su-Ma-Na-Ho-Mī /
(Repeat 3 Times)

Pi-Yo-Te-Wā / Ma-Nus-Sā-Nang / Pi-Yo-Phrom-Mā /
Na-Mut-Iā-Mo / Pi-Yo-Na-Ka / Su-Pun-Na-Nang / Pi-Nin-See-Young /
Na-Ma-Mi-Hūng / Nā-Mo-Pūt-Tā-Ya / Nā-Von-Nā-Vean /
Na-Sa-Tit / Na-Sa-Tean / Ey-Hj-Mā-Mā / Na-Vgan-Na-Ve /
Na-Pai-Tang-Vean / Na-Vean-Ma-Hā-Kuu / Ey-Hj-Ma-Ma /
Pi-Young-Ma-Ma / Nā-Mo-Pūt-Iā-Ya
(Repeat 1 Time)

Na-Ah / Na-Wa / Ro-Kaa / Pa-Yā-Ti / Wi-Nas-Santi
(Repeat 3 Times)

Sā-Tu No Pan-Te
(Bow)

English Translation by Tevijjo Yogi

OM.
I bow my head in homage to Jivaka.
With compassion for all sentient beings he has brought divine medicine.
Shining bright as the sun and moon, Komarabhacca.
I declare my adoration to the Teacher, the wise one.
May I be free from disease and happy.
(Repeat 3 Times)

Beloved by deities and humans,
Beloved by Brahma, I pay the highest homage.
Beloved by Nagas and heavenly beings,
Of pure faculties, I pay homage.
[Untranslated incantation for success in one's practice:
Na-Mo-Pūt-Iā-Ya / Na-Von-Na-Vean /
Na-Sa-Iit / Na-Sa-Tean / A-Hj-Mā-Mā / Na-Vgan-Na-Ve /
Na-Pai-Tang-Vean / Na-Vean-Ma-Hā-Kuu / A-Hj-Ma-Ma /
Pi-Young-Ma-Ma / Nā-Mo-Pūt-Iā-Ya]
(Repeat 1 Times)

May disease and illness be utterly destroyed!
(Repeat 3 Times)

Well said!
(Bow)

The chant is to be followed by offerings from Teachers, Staff, and Students.

Appendix 2: Ethical Codes



Shivagakomarpaj Lineage

Five Guidelines for Shivagakomarpaj Lineage Practitioners

1. Endeavor to cultivate *metta* and maintain a spiritual approach to your healing practice. Continually work through your practice for the betterment of your clients and all of humanity.
2. Honor Jivaka and your teachers through a regular practice of *wai khru*.
3. Express your gratitude for the gift of Thai healing knowledge through charity, donations of time, and acts of kindness and respect to Thai people.
4. Refrain from taking students until you are qualified and are fully prepared to pass down the knowledge and traditions in the proper way.
5. Maintain integrity, honesty, and clarity in all promotional materials and in how you talk about your practice. Don't misrepresent your training, your scope of practice, or the origin of the techniques that you perform. (For example, if your massage involves a massage table, undressing, or lotions and oils, refrain from calling it "Thai Massage" or other terms associated with Thailand.) Bring a good reputation to your teacher, massage school, and lineage.

I agree to the above Guidelines for the Shivagakomarpaj Lineage by signing below.

Signed:_____Date:_____

Full Name:_____

The Ethics of Professional Thai Massage Agreement

The purpose of this agreement is to harmonize Traditional Thai massage practitioners, to create a great benefit for their clients, to ensure professional Traditional Thai massage training, and to develop and to maintain the viability of Traditional Thai Massage. It has been developed by the Reviving Thai Massage Project, together with Traditional Thai massage practitioners who have made this agreement a standard practice for all.

Written by Saamlee Jaidee

President of Reviving Traditional Thai Massage Project

President of Public Health Foundation

(Third Review March 20, 1999)

Translation and Editing: Mrs. Vimonrat Santhanaporn Wester, Thai Institute of Healing Arts (Arlington, VA)

Oath of the Traditional Thai Massage Practitioner

I (Mr. Mrs. Miss)_____as a Thai massage practitioner, pledge that

1. I will dedicate myself to the profession of Traditional Thai massage and hold the good health and safety of the client as my main concern.
2. I will strictly follow the Ethics of Professional Thai Massage Agreement.
3. I will further study and enhance my massage skills in order to maintain a high standard of Traditional Thai Massage.

4. I will uphold my own reputation and the reputation of Traditional Thai Massage. I will maintain a good relationship with all Traditional Thai Massage practitioners.
5. I will voluntarily keep this oath as long as I am a professional Thai Massage practitioner.

Ethics for Traditional Thai Massage

1. Take good care of all clients according to the same standard.
2. Be honest, have loving kindness and compassion, do not be greedy, do not expect undue gains, obey the law, and do not act or participate in any activities that can ruin the reputation of Traditional Thai Massage.
3. Continually endeavor to learn new techniques from books and from experts. Participate in activities related to exchanging and expanding massage knowledge, in order to improve the standards of the profession and to maintain high standards in the treatment of clients.
4. Respect all clients' privacy. Do not share client information with any party except as permitted by the clients or required by law. Do not boast about your knowledge, lie, offend, assault, or sexually harass any client.
5. Do not engage in excesses such as sexual misconduct, gambling, drugs, alcohol, or intoxicants.
6. Do not practice in any inappropriate places (such as brothels, casinos, bars), except in case of emergency.
7. Support other Thai massage professionals and other medical professionals for the benefit of all your clients. Do not boast or look down on other practitioners.
8. Cooperate to create unity among all practitioners and between Traditional Thai massage and other health-related professions.
9. Support Thai organizations to improve professional Traditional Thai Massage and Traditional Thai Medicine. Dedicate your time, knowledge, and other skills to help these organizations.

Best Practices for Traditional Thai Massage

1. Dress properly, and be pleasant.
2. Wash hands and feet before and after giving massage. Also, clean all massage equipment.
3. Before giving massage, focus yourself, give respect to your teachers, give respect to the clients, interview clients about their symptoms and concerns, and understand their condition and limitations.
4. During the massage, respect their personal space. (For example, when massaging the left side of the body, sit on the left side. When massaging the right side of the body, sit on the right side.) Do not sit on the client if not necessary.
5. During the massage, do not drink, smoke, or eat, and do not breathe on the client.
6. During the massage, inform the client about what you are doing in order to comfort and encourage them. Always respect their feelings and concerns.
7. During the massage, listen to your clients and ask them how they feel. Stop massaging when the clients want a break, or if they experience any pain.
8. Never give massage when you are sick.
9. Do not give massage to clients who have finished a meal less than 30 minutes prior to the massage.
10. Treat all clients to the best of your ability, working to actively improve their health with each massage. Ensure that you do not spread out their treatments for the sake of monetary gains. If you cannot help them, recommend them to other practitioners who have more skill or to other medical professionals.

I agree to the above Ethics of Professional Thai Massage Agreement by signing below.

Signed:_____Date:_____

Full Name:_____

Appendix 3: Thai Massage Diagnostic Form



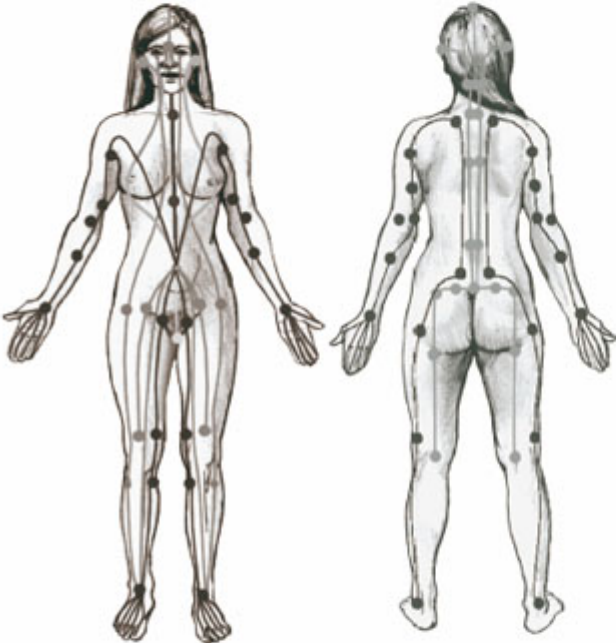
Sen Diagnosis Form

Note: This form should be used in conjunction with a conventional massage therapy SOAP-notes form.

Using the chart at left...

Indicate location of symptoms.
 X = blockage
 O = breakage

Sen lines involved:



Elemental balance
 (circle excess, depletion, or neutral):
 Earth: t f -
 Air: t f -
 Fire: t f -
 Water: t f -

Indicate acupressure therapy (hot/cold)
 on chart, using arrows to show direction of
 movement.

What is this client's primary sen line condition?

What is your course of therapy?

Additional notes on reverse.

Appendix 4: Overview of the Classic Routine

1. Opening Prayer

FLUSH TOWARD NAVEL

FEET AND LEG LINES SERIES

2. Walking Palm Press
3. Thumb Press the Feet
4. Thumb Press the Bottom of the Foot, and Thumb Circle the Top of the Foot
5. Pull Each Toe to Crack Knuckles
6. Stretching the Foot
7. Ankle Rotation Repeat Steps 3-7 for the other foot
8. Stretching the Feet and Ankles
9. Palm Pressing Both Legs
10. Stretch Inside of Leg
11. Palm Press Inside of Leg
12. Thumb Press Inside Sen of the Leg Finish the A-B-C-B-A Pattern by Repeating Palm Press and Stretch
13. Stretch Outside of Same Leg
14. Palm Press Outside of Leg
15. Thumb Press Outside Sen of the Leg Finish the A-B-C-B-A Pattern by Repeating Palm Press and Stretch Repeat Steps 10-15 for Other Leg
16. Finish the Legs with a Palm Press and “Opening the Wind Gate”

LEG STRETCH SERIES

17. Figure 4 Walking Palm Press
18. Figure 4 Hip Stretch
19. “Paddleboat” on Line **i3**
20. Finger Press on Line **o1**

21. “Thai Fist” on Lines **i 1** and **i 2**
22. Leg Traction
23. Shake Leg to Relax
24. Hip Rotation
25. Hip Flexion and Quad Stretch
26. Hamstring Stretch
27. Hip Stretch (Lateral Rotation)
28. Lying Spinal Twist
29. Quadriceps Stretch (Medial Rotation of Hip)
30. Shake Leg to Relax
31. Rotate Hip
32. Hamstring and Calf Stretch
33. Triangle (Abduction of Hip)
34. Cross-Stretch (Adduction of Hips)
35. Shake Leg to Relax Repeat Steps **17-35** for Other Leg

HANDS AND ARMS SERIES

36. Thumb Press Hand Points
37. Thumb Circle Back of Hand
38. Stretch Palm & Fingers
39. Pull Each Finger and Crack Knuckles
40. Stretch, Palm Press, and Thumb Press Outer Arm Sen
41. Stretch, Palm Press, and Thumb Press Inner Arm Sen
42. Palm Press and Opening the Wind Gate
43. Rotate Wrist
44. Rotate Elbow
45. Rotate Shoulder
46. Pull Arm to Stretch
47. Medial Arm Pull
48. Stretch the Triceps
49. Palm Press Arm Above Head
50. Shake Arm to Relax

Repeat Steps **36-50** for Opposite Side

ABDOMINAL SERIES

- 51.** Finger Press Below Clavicles
- 52.** Finger Circle Rib Cage
- 53.** Thumb Press or Finger Press in the Intercostal Spaces
- 54.** Palm Circle and Press on Sternum
- 55.** Palm Circles on Abdomen
- 56.** Palm Press Abdomen
- 57.** Thumb Press Around Navel
- 58.** Finger Press Psoas
- 59.** Back Lift
- 60.** Rock Hips to Relax

FULL-BODY STRETCHES

- 61.** Gentle Back stretch
- 62.** Lower Hamstring Stretch
- 63.** Upper Hamstring Stretch
- 64.** Pigeon Pose

Repeat **62-64** for the other leg

- 65.** The Plow
- 66.** Butterfly
- 67.** Double Leg Pull-Up
- 68.** Cross-Legged Pull-Up
- 69.** Forward Bend with Crossed Legs
- 70.** Bound Angle Pose
- 71.** Forward Bend with Straight Legs
- 72.** Forward Bend with Wide-Angle Legs
- 73.** “Motorcycle” Back Stretch
- 74.** Fish Pose
- 75.** Seated Spinal Twist

76. Back Lift

77. Thai Chop on Back

OPTIONAL THERAPY ROUTINE

FLUSH TOWARD CROWN

BACK SERIES

78. Knee Press Feet

79. Thumb Press Foot Points

80. Stretch Legs

81. Palm Press Legs

82. Thumb Press Along Line i3

Finish the A-B-C-B-A Pattern by Repeating Palm Press and Stretch

83. Forearm Roll the Hamstrings

84. Elbow Press Along Line i3

85. Rotate Ankle

86. Calf Stretch

87. Knee Flexion

Repeat Steps **83-87** for the Other Side

88. Thumb Press Hip Points

89. Finger Press or Elbow Press Gluteal Muscles

90. Palm Circle Sacrum

91. Stretch Back

92. Palm Press Back

93. Thumb Press Sen of the Back

Finish A-B-C-B-A Pattern by Repeating Palm Press and Stretch

94. Palm Circle Rib Cage

95. Pull Trapezius Muscles

96. Shoulder Mobilization

97. Press Under Scapula

98. Cobra

99. Single-Leg Locust

HEAD, NECK, AND FACE SERIES

100. Thumb Press Under Clavicles

101. Gently Stretch Neck by Pressing on Shoulders

102. Ear Massage

Repeat **101-102** for the Other Side

103. Finger Press Along Trapezius and Neck

104. Base of Skull and Back of Head

105. Forehead and Chin Lines

106. Scrub Scalp with “Shampooing” Motion

FULL-BODY FLUSH & FINAL M ETTA

107. Create a Vacuum with the Ears

108. Finish with a Meditation of Thanksgiving and Healing

Appendix 5: Where to Study Thai Massage

Studying Massage in Thailand

Traditionally, the Thai healing arts have been passed from teacher to student or from parent to child through an oral tradition of learning. It was not uncommon for Thai students to move in with their teacher and to live side by side with them for many years. Such traditional forms of learning require significant dedication and trust from both the teacher and student. The privilege to learn the treasured wisdom of the teacher is earned by the student through maintaining a constant relationship of closeness and respect. As the relationship deepens, the teacher trusts the student enough to impart higher degrees of knowledge. Respect from the student for the teachings he or she receives and for the teacher allows the relationship to deepen and continue. This is the most rewarding way to learn the Thai healing arts, but it requires an absolute minimum of a year in Thailand and proficiency in Thai language for this type of “immersion” experience. While the traditional immersion is the ideal mode of Thai Massage education, shorter courses are offered at many schools that cater to tourists and travelers with less time to spend.

With the discovery of Thai Massage by the Western world, tourists have flocked to Thailand wanting to learn this art. Particularly if you are visiting Chiang Mai, the many massage schools you will see may appear to be indistinguishable at first. Remember, however, that where you choose to study matters. Not only is the quality of education you receive from a school critical but you should ask yourself whether the reputation of that school will support you throughout your career in the Thai healing arts. As the popularity of Thai Massage continues to grow, there has been a boom in the number of Western practitioners of the Thai healing arts. With so many Thai

practitioners in the marketplace today, the integrity of your credentials will become an important factor to increasingly savvy clients.

With the surge of student enrollment in Thai Massage classes and countless schools popping up all over the place, it's just as important to closely review the available choices of schools in Thailand as you would any other place. Look for a school with a long history of teaching classes. Don't make decisions based on websites; make in-person visits to schools you are considering before making a final decision on where to study. Try to get a sense of the instructors, their background, and their overall teaching style. If you are able to communicate well with the instructors in informal conversation, then you can expect less of a language barrier in the classroom setting. If the school has a massage center, get a massage, as this can help you to determine the quality of their program and offerings. Always remember the educational experience will be different from what you are used to in your home country. Any student choosing to study in Thailand will need to exercise patience, and avoid creating Western-centric expectations of what the experience will or should be like.

My own feeling is that anyone hoping to learn Thai Massage should seek out the best institutions in their own country to learn the basic routine before traveling to Thailand. I feel that a traveler with a few weeks or months to spend in Thailand is not served by spending this precious time learning the basics in a crowded class of tourists who may or may not take this art form seriously. Most Western students will, moreover, find themselves disappointed by the lack of theoretical teaching at most Thai schools, as well as by the inevitable language and cultural barrier that still exists for Western students traveling to Thailand.

On the other hand, the traveler who is already familiar with Thai Massage and has a decent background in *sen* theory can travel to Thailand and learn directly from practitioners of this art by receiving, observing, and discussing massage in any school — or better yet, in a more personal one-on-one setting. There is an older generation of true masters practicing in tucked-away corners of Chiang Mai, Bangkok, and more remote locations.

These people have neither websites nor international marketing campaigns, and thus remain relatively unknown to prospective travelers. These are the individuals with whom one can truly see the highest levels of perfection of the art forms, and with whom it is a unique privilege to work. Of course, learning with them requires a certain amount of background knowledge, as such teachers will usually turn away students who are not yet proficient in the basic skills. It also requires that you travel to Thailand, track them down, and spend the time getting to know them. If you are persistent, though, your efforts will pay dividends and you will have the experience of a lifetime.

Studying Thai Massage in the West

Searching for a course in Thai Massage outside Thailand can also be a daunting process. Many schools talk about their credentials, their curriculum, and other facets of their teachings in ways that can be confusing and sometimes misleading to beginning students. In reality, most Thai Massage schools in the West essentially teach the steps introduced in Part 2 of this book — perhaps adding or subtracting a few of the steps or shifting around their order. The major difference from place to place is not the bodywork techniques but how well the teachings are grounded in Thai theory, how well the atmosphere reflects the principles of *metta*, how extensive the cultural knowledge of the teacher is, and how much attention is paid to safety and proper body mechanics. In my opinion, these should be your minimum criteria in choosing a school:

- 1. TRAINING:** When investigating a school, be sure that the teacher studied extensively in Thailand and didn't simply take a short course of a few weeks' duration. Unfortunately, most Western teachers have had limited if any exposure to Thai culture, Traditional Thai Medicine, or even Thai Massage theory in their training. You should be sure that the teacher you choose is intimately familiar with the history, theory, and culture of all aspects of Thai healing. A good instructor will possess the ability to

transmit both technical and cultural knowledge so that the student will have the fullest learning experience.

2. **CONNECTION WITH THAILAND:** All instructors should have spent several years in Thailand (whether all at once or split up over a longer period). The most dedicated teachers will also regularly visit Thailand and maintain a close relationship with their local Thai community in the West. Staying connected to the cultural heritage and indigenous practices of Thailand exhibits a teacher's sense of appreciation to the Thais for the knowledge they have acquired. Charitable giving and community building are also important ways a teacher can maintain their cultural connection and make a difference in the community of Thai people. These are signs to you of their seriousness, commitment, and personal engagement in the Thai healing arts.
3. **AUTHENTICITY:** Oftentimes when theoretical knowledge of Thai Massage and Traditional Thai Medicine is lacking, teachers will substitute theory from other disciplines like Ayurveda, Chinese Medicine, *hatha yoga*, and other Asian or even Western teachings. It's of utmost importance to be aware that these teachings are not Thai, and that their introduction will be misleading if you are looking for a deep understanding of this therapeutic art. Thailand has its own unique medical theory, and it is essential for students of Traditional Thai Massage and Traditional Thai Medicine to approach these traditions on their own merits. In order to learn properly, your education needs to be unfiltered through the lens of any other tradition.
4. **LINEAGE AND ETHICS:** Also be sure to interview teachers about the lineage to which they belong. As in most Asian arts, lineage is an important mark of authenticity in Thai Massage. From the traditional viewpoint, a teacher who does not belong to or does not know about his or her lineage is not worth studying with. Any school seriously teaching Thai Massage will

include a daily *wai khru* ceremony to honor Jivaka Komarabhacca as the founder of the tradition, and to give thanks to their own teachers. They will also adhere to the traditional code of ethics of the Thai Massage practitioner in their training programs. They will also incorporate the Buddhist principles of loving kindness and take the Five Precepts (discussed in Chapter 1) as guides for their business practices.

Studying within the Shivagakomarpaj Lineage

If you are interested in learning Thai Massage for fun, you can study just about anywhere that meets the minimum criteria outlined above. If you are a serious-minded practitioner looking for a comprehensive training experience, however, I offer below some suggestions on how to approximate the traditional immersion learning within the Shivagakomarpaj Lineage.

The two schools mentioned below function as “sister schools,” offering students the opportunity to study in the United States or in Thailand while staying within the same curriculum, organizational structure, and educational philosophy. Once you complete a course at either school, you are able to repeat the same course as often as you like at either location at no additional cost. By allowing students to be present in the classroom continuously without additional cost, this free internship program allows students the opportunity to approximate the experience of an immersion-style learning over the long term. (See the following website to link to both locations: www.oldmedicinehospital.com.)

Thai Massage School Shivagakomarpaj

(“Old Medicine Hospital”)

www.thaimassage.ac.th



The seat of the Shivagakomarpaj Lineage in Chiang Mai, the Thai Massage School Shivagakomarpaj (fondly known as the “Old Medicine Hospital”) is the source of the knowledge of most practitioners, teachers, and schools in the Western world in one form or another. In the year that this second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Thai Massage* is being published, the school is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Founded by the late Ajahn (“Master”) Sintorn Chaichakan, the Old Medicine Hospital has grown from humble beginnings to become one of the most prestigious schools in all of Thailand (see details in Chapter 1).

Classes at the Old Medicine Hospital range from a beginning course through multiple levels of professional training. Classes in Thai herbal massage, Thai foot massage, and other modalities are also provided on a rotating schedule. The Old Medicine Hospital has the distinction of being recognized by all major massage organizations in the United States and Thailand. The school is also accredited to provide continuing education credits for students needing NCBTMB, Yoga Alliance, and other Western professional certifications.

When you travel to the school, allow yourself plenty of time to study. Courses last one to five days; however, the serious student will want to stay for additional classes or internship opportunities. Once you complete a course, you can retake the same course over as often as you would like — either in Thailand or in the United States — as a way of deepening your learning and gaining more knowledge.



Thai Institute of Healing Arts

www.Thai-Institute.com

The only comprehensive Thai medical education, research, and treatment center outside Thailand to date, the Thai Institute of Healing Arts offers a full range of in-depth courses in the Thai medical traditions. The Old Medicine Hospital has designated the Thai Institute as the only official seat of the Shivagakomarpaj Lineage outside Thailand.

The Thai Institute was founded as a bridge for Westerners to the traditional Thai healing arts. The instructors and staff have dedicated decades of their lives to learning from, or are themselves, native Thai healthcare professionals. The Thai Institute also operates two therapy centers that employ Thais and Westerners offering Thai Massage under the oversight of Traditional Thai Medicine doctors. The organization's therapy, research, and education centers work collaboratively: the latest research is integrated into treatments and the training, while the treatment centers feed clinical data into the research projects and the curriculum. The Thai Institute also provides an interactive online community with access to Thai healing arts practitioners across the world, current research in the field, and resources to start one's own Thai practice — all free of charge to the public. Charitable giving is also part of the fabric of the Thai Institute. The Thai Institute has initiated multiple projects both in the United States and in Thailand that benefit the people of Southeast Asia.

Programs at the Thai Institute range from a one-day Introduction to Thai Massage to a full multi-year Teacher Training Program. The Thai Institute offers a structured progression of study, from the basic levels through more advanced study, including classes in Traditional Thai Medicine, Thai herbal massage, Thai foot massage, and is now creating a certified massage therapy program specializing in Thai Massage that prepares students for the US national massage certification exam. Continuing education courses are available for students needing NCBTMB, Yoga Alliance, and other professional certification. The Thai Institute is recognized by all major massage organizations in the United States and Thailand (including by the Thai Ministry of Public Health).

Appendix 6: Further Reading

In addition to the sources cited at the end of this book, I recommend the following titles for further reading.

Thai Medicine and Herbal Traditions

SALGUERO, C. PIERCE.

A Thai Herbal: Recipes for Health and Harmony. Forres, Scotland: Findhorn Press, 2001

This book is the only English-language introduction to the traditional herbal medicine of Thailand. An introduction to Thai medical theory, including Four Element diagnosis is presented. A chapter on herbal compresses details several recipes, and the compendium of over 150 herbs allows for detailed comparison of medicinal properties. Indexes in English Thai, and Latin, as well as by ailment, action, and taste.

SALGUERO, C. PIERCE.

The Spiritual Healing of Traditional Thailand. Forres, Scotland: Findhorn Press, 2006.

A traveller's guide to the spiritual healing traditions of Thailand. Basic Buddhist practices and an introduction to the Thai spirit world are explained and illustrated with full-color photos.

SALGUERO, C. PIERCE.

Traditional Thai Medicine: Buddhism, Animism, Ayurveda. Prescott, Ariz.: Hohm Press, 2007.

This book is a comprehensive review of the history and contemporary cultural practices of traditional Thai healing. It is essential reading for all teachers and serious practitioners of Thai Massage, and forms the basis of much of the discussion in Chapter 1 of this book.

Anatomy and Physiology

CALAIS-GERMAIN, BLANDINE.

Anatomy of Movement. Seattle: Eastland Press, 1993.

In my opinion, this is the best introduction to anatomy and how it relates to the movement of the body. I consider it to be required reading for my advanced students, and feel it would be beneficial for any bodyworker, yoga instructor, or massage therapist.

COULTER, H. DAVID.

Anatomy of Hatha Yoga: A Manual for Students, Teachers, and Practitioners. Honesdale, PA: Body and Breath, Inc., 2001

An impressive and complete guide to the anatomy and physiology of the practice of yoga. This is a very thick and complex book, and may not be appropriate for the beginner. However, it is essential to the serious practice of Hatha Yoga or of Thai Massage. Chapter 1 is particularly interesting.

MYERS, THOMAS.

Anatomy Trains, 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone / Elsevier, 2009

This book is the definitive guide to the theory and practice of anatomy trains, or myofascial meridians. As Myers points out, these meridians are exceedingly similar to Thai *sen*, although they are based entirely in a Western biomedical understanding of the body.

Yoga

IYENGAR, B.K.S.

Light on Yoga: Revised Edition. New York:

Schocken Books, 1979

As it states on the front cover of my edition of this book, this is “the Bible of modern yoga by the world’s foremost teacher.” This is a lighter read than Coulter’s book, but is still geared toward the fairly advanced practitioner of Hatha Yoga. Even so, I consider it indispensable for the Thai therapist.

SILVA, MIRA AND SHYAM MEHTA.

Yoga the Iyengar Way: The New Definitive Illustrated Guide. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003

A highly readable and attractive pictorial guide to the practice of Hatha Yoga. This is a great book for novice students of yoga and Thai massage. The postures are explained with detailed points of alignment.

Travel to Thailand

O'REILLY, JAMES AND LARRY HABEGGER, EDS.

Thailand, True Stories. San Francisco: Traveler’s Tales, Inc., 2002

This is a fun little book which will give the reader a glimpse into Thai culture and the life of the Western traveler in this colorful country. Each chapter is a separate vignette on some aspect of Thailand. Some stories will make you laugh, some will shatter your illusions, but all will entertain.

WILLIAMS, CHINA, ET AL.

Lonely Planet Thailand. Melbourne: Lonely

Planet Publications, 2009

This is not only the pre-eminent guidebook for budget travel to Thailand, but is also a great read. The Lonely Planet series is known for being a reliable and interesting source of cultural information as well as for covering all of the details you need to know to visit. Be sure to acquire the most recent edition.

Buddhism

KORNFIELD, JACK.

Living Dharma: Teachings of Twelve Buddhist Masters. Boston: Shambhala, 1996

Buddhism in Southeast Asia has very little to do with the more familiar Tibetan and Zen traditions. This book is a wonderful introduction to 12 Buddhist teachers, half of whom were native to Thailand. Kornfield, a well-known meditation teacher himself, covers the breadth of teaching styles and meditation techniques taught in Theravada Buddhism. This is a great place to start for those interested in pursuing Thai Buddhism and/or Vipassana meditation.

Images of Thailand

JOTISALIKORN, CHAMI.

Thai Spa Book: The Natural Asian Way to Health and Beauty. Hong Kong: Periplus Editions, 2002

This is a beautiful book with excellent photos. It presents a very attractive (although not extensive) guide to some Thai beauty and herbal treatments. A great gift or a coffee-table book for your massage clinic.

WARREN, WILLIAM & LUCA INVERNIZZI.

Thailand: The Golden Kingdom. Hong Kong: Periplus Editions, 1999

The same photographer as the above book. Provides excellent views of Thailand's beauty. Another nice gift or coffee-table book.

Endnotes

- 1 This research is discussed in more detail in C. Pierce Salguero. 2007. *Traditional Thai Medicine: Buddhism, Animism, Ayurveda*. Prescott, Ariz.: Hohm Press.
- 2 Brun, Viggo & Trend Schumacher. 1994. *Traditional Herbal Medicine in Northern Thailand*. Bangkok: White Lotus.
- 3 These manuscripts are discussed in A.B.Griswold. 1965. “The Rishis of Wat Po.” In *Felicitation Volumes of Southeast-Asian Studies Presented to His Highness Prince Dhaninivat Kromamun Bidyalabh Brind-hyakorn*. Bangkok: The Siam Society; K. I. Matics, 1977. “Medical Arts at Wat Phra Chetuphon: Various Rishi Statues.” *Journal of the Siam Society* 65 (2): 145-52.
- 4 The following historical timeline is excerpted from C. Pierce Salguero. 2006. *The Spiritual Healing of Traditional Thailand*. Forres: Findhorn Press, pp. 129–35.
- 5 Quoted from Kenneth G. Zysk. 1998. *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India: Medicine in the Buddhist Monastery*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, pp. 53–54. See the complete Jivaka story in I. B. Horner. 2000. *The Book of the Discipline (Vinaya-Piaka)*. Oxford: Pali Text Society, pp. 379–98.
- 6 See a more detailed comparison between Thai, Chinese, and Indian energy systems in C. Pierce Salguero. 2007. *Traditional Thai Medicine: Buddhism, Animism, Ayurveda*. Prescott, Ariz.: Hohm Press.

- 7 Myers, Thomas. *Anatomy Trains, 2nd ed.* Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone/Elsevier, 2009.
- 8 Salguero, C. Pierce 2003. *A Thai Herbal: Traditional Recipes for Health & Harmony*, Forres, Scotland: Findhorn Press.

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