

There are many massage therapists. The great majority are licensed, as state law requires, and have gone through a state-approved program with hundreds of hours training. Most have kept up with their continuing education units and are competent in many areas. So how on Earth do you pick one? Most consumers become overwhelmed by the sheer number of choices. The average person ends up making a decision based solely on two factors. Who costs the least? Who can get me in the quickest? Or, many simply choose to visit a spa or salon and let luck of the draw determine who is going to touch them. These are not necessarily the best ways to find the massage therapist that's right for you.

Chances are a friend, coworker, or family member gets massages for special occasions or on a regular basis. Who do they go to? What do they like about their therapist? Keep in mind that every client is different. What you will like from a massage might not be the same as your brother Bob or sister Susie. Just because they go to someone for deep tissue doesn't mean that's the only thing that therapist offers. Part of the massage education is how to adjust technique and pressure for the individual client's preferences and tolerances. Talking to the people around you is a great way to gather names of trusted massage therapists.

My next suggestion is to try the internet. Yes, many therapists have an ad in a local health publication or in the yellow pages. Yes, many of them have put cards up on bulletin boards in health stores. But why rely on a few inches of information when a whole web page is available? These days you can find most information in the web and information about your prospective massage therapist is no different. (Not all therapists have websites, so keep a few of the cards that you really liked as well.)

Take a look at a few websites. What makes one therapist different from another? What specialties does each have? What kind of training? What about testimonials? Not all information will be available on every website; however it's a good start. Get a feel for the site. Narrow your choices down to therapists who provide the modalities you prefer (such as general relaxation, Hot Stone, Myofascial Release, CranioSacral, or Reiki) and who offer hours when you're available. Find the ones that have a location close to your home or work. If you want a house call (the therapist brings their equipment to your home) find out who offers that service.

Leave a Voice Mail Message

Think about this: would you want your massage interrupted so that the therapist can make an appointment with another client? Of course not! Please leave a message with your name, phone number, and any other information the voice mail prompt requests. Allow enough time for the therapist to get back to you. There isn't any rush, here. Give yourself at least a few days to decide who you want to trust with your body.

Next, start making phone calls. Ask questions. Don't be shy!

Hopefully at this point you will have talked to a few different therapists. Did one of them really make you feel comfortable? Did someone really click with your personality? Did they answer your questions, seem interested in what's going on with you, and talk to you in a way that you understood?

If the answer is no, it's time to make some more phone calls.

Once you find someone that you really have a good feeling about it's time to book your appointment with them. If you have to wait a few days, or even a week, to see that person, I would recommend waiting. Don't worry about whether they charge \$10 more than the person down the street or don't have a new client special. Would you rather save a few dollars or find someone that you can trust and who will give you an excellent massage?

Are you concerned about Price?

I highly recommend checking out the student clinic at your nearest massage school. For a small fee you will receive a relaxation massage from a current student. They need the practice and it is part of their requirements to graduate. You'll be getting a great deal and helping someone at the same time.

In future articles I'll discuss ways to save money on relaxation services as well as why it's beneficial to stick with one therapist once you've found one you really like.

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