

Phenomenal Touch Massage:

A Sacred Dance of the Heart

By Jonathan Grassi



Between wakefulness and sleep, a gentle peace bathes you from deep within. Your breath flows full in your belly. Your body becomes heavy, releasing its weight in a profound surrender. You feel the freedom of your tissues, the fluidity of your spine. You are lifted and held, cradled and undulated. The waves match your own speed, your own rhythm. Your defenses dissolve, layer after layer, with each rise and fall, every expansion and contraction. You remember feeling this safe before, when you were held as a child.

This is Phenomenal Touch Massage. While each session is uniquely tailored to the organic unfolding of the receiver's body, the foundation of the work is always honored. Leslie Bruder, the creator of Phenomenal Touch, says that simply following its principles of presence, reverence, and love will generate the sacred dance of this touch therapy.

Presence naturally leads to wonder, wonder evolves into reverence, and reverence births a deep love and appre-

ciation for what is before you. This is the heart of the therapist's every movement, every touch. And every touch creates a sacred pathway for the receiver to return to the self.

Though it shares some qualities with Watsu, Trager and yoga, as well as Thai and Esalen massage, Phenomenal Touch originated independently of these modalities. As a small child, Bruder had been drawn to touching and sculpting the body. She cultivated this natural desire into a professional ability to intuitively

respond to the deep call of the body. What unfolded and emerged in her sessions never failed to astound her and her clients, and informed, over her 30+ years of professional practice, what has become known as Phenomenal Touch Massage.

Certified massage therapists from around the country come to Boulder to study this advanced modality at the Institute for Phenomenal Touch Massage (IPTM). Founded only five years ago, IPTM has earned global attention for



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Leslie Bruder, creator of Phenomenal Touch Massage

changing the face of touch therapy. Short courses are available for those wishing to explore the work, while students wanting to become a Master Practitioner and revolutionize their bodywork practice enroll in a year-long certification program.

Like many massage approaches, Phenomenal Touch employs a massage table, therapeutic oils, and draping. Deep and specific, gentle and soothing, or wavelike and freeing, over 100 distinct techniques—with names like Shiva, Rag Doll, Mermaid, and Slide 'n' Drool—have been developed from the 75+ essential principles, such as three-dimensionality, revisiting, seamless transitioning, and utilizing gravity.

Students first learn how to free the client's body from the table, stretching and rocking him or her beyond the bounds of standard massage. Next, they learn how to work both sides of the body simultaneously, creating a fluid dance between their hands, and how to seamlessly weave each movement into the next. Spirals and S-curves are used to sculpt, as they flow from one region of the body to another, and back again. To create depth, students are taught not to push on the body but to lift the client and allow his or her body to drape over their hand. Deep, non-invasive muscular contact is generated simply through gravity. So that they can lift almost any client without strain, students learn how to utilize momentum and mechanical advantage.

Once they learn these fundamentals, students are encouraged to come back to the deeper intention of the work: to

meet the client. This means truly listening and adapting to his or her needs. For an elderly client, this may mean smaller movements and gentle contact; for the supple and limber client, dynamic stretches and deep muscular contact; and for the grieving client, offering an embrace as he or she feels the loss. The Phenomenal Touch therapist holds the space without an agenda or a plan, allowing the client to create the healing opportunity that he or she desires.

Recipients of this massage modality have responded with astonishment ("Oh, my God!"), primal satisfaction ("That was better than chocolate."), and awe ("I feel so beautiful."). Indeed, receiving Phenomenal Touch is a special and rare opportunity, as there are fewer than 50 Master Practitioners in the entire country.

Nevertheless, this work reaches far in its deeply transformative effect on those

who have given and received it—a timely modality in this age of dramatic global change that calls us to remember our essential connection with self and with each other, and to touch the world with presence, reverence, and love.

Jonathan Grassi is a Licensed Massage Therapist and a Master Practitioner and instructor of Phenomenal Touch Massage. He loves sharing this work through his classes and private practice in Boulder. Contact Jonathan at 303-877-7475 or jmg94@cornell.edu. The Institute for Phenomenal Touch Massage can be reached at 303-494-6204 or www.phenomenaltouch.com. [See the news brief on page 6 announcing a free introductory class in Phenomenal Touch Massage.]



Jonathan Grassi

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