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GOOD VIBRATIONS MARCH 2009 NEWSLETTER

Last month I mentioned in the "What's New?" segment that I have a new hand held percussor/thumper massager tool. One of my personal trainers joked with me about how I might become so dependent on it and *laissez-faire* about it, that eventually one day I would have a cup of coffee in one hand and the thumper in the other ... effectively not doing massage with my actual hands anymore!

I've had a thumper used on me in the past with chiropractic treatments, and I had much fun hearing my vibrating voice as I talked throughout my adjustment. But since I generally felt rattled during the application, I didn't really give the thumper much credit. When a colleague used hers on me to loosen up some of my stubbornly tight muscles before she did massage, I couldn't believe the difference it made in how effective the massage felt. When I initially bought my own thumper shortly afterwards, it was intended for my own self care, but then I realized it can contribute further to my well being by making my job easier in the first place.

So what is a percussion massager and why am I using it on clients? It is a hand held corded massage tool that has two or more round heads that are applied to the body, and at the flick of a switch, it vibrates or thumps the muscle tissue, depending on the rate and amplitude of the oscillations setting. Under the umbrella of Swedish massage techniques, there actually is a technique called Vibrations and it is admittedly one of the most difficult to master - so much, that I never really bothered with it. One has to alternately contract and relax the muscles of the forearm fast enough to create a rhythmic vibration, and I found that even if I could get it going, it was exhausting to do it longer than 20 seconds. The thumper is wayyy easier! Why do vibrations work? Because it's an "unusual" feeling to introduce to the body, it's a helpful technique in painful areas, extremely tight areas, and areas that need sensory re-

education. I've found the thumper to be very useful in these situations:

- A client strained his lateral quadriceps muscle during martial arts training and was having trouble with his knee weeks later; the affected area was still too painful to massage directly because it was so tight (not inflamed), and applying the percussor at a distance away helped to decrease muscle tone enough for me to eventually work directly on the site.
- Another client has mind-body childhood trauma she's working through, and there are frequent times where her body resists massage. Application of the thumper on the entire back of her body helps her to "let go", breathe, and relax in preparation for hands-on massage.

Any stubborn muscle fibers that don't respond to my hands-on efforts get treated to the thumper-massager. It's so much easier and faster for me to get into the muscle after and smooth it out, and I'm certain it helps improve the local circulation to the area also. One thumper recipient said "*this must be what a sidewalk feels like...*", and I thought yes, it **is** kind of like a jackhammer effect!

So ... unless you see me with a hardhat and protective eye goggles, or a cup of coffee in hand ... don't worry, the thumper will never replace the power of hands-on therapy! I'll even tell you where to buy one and how much they are, if you really want to know!

