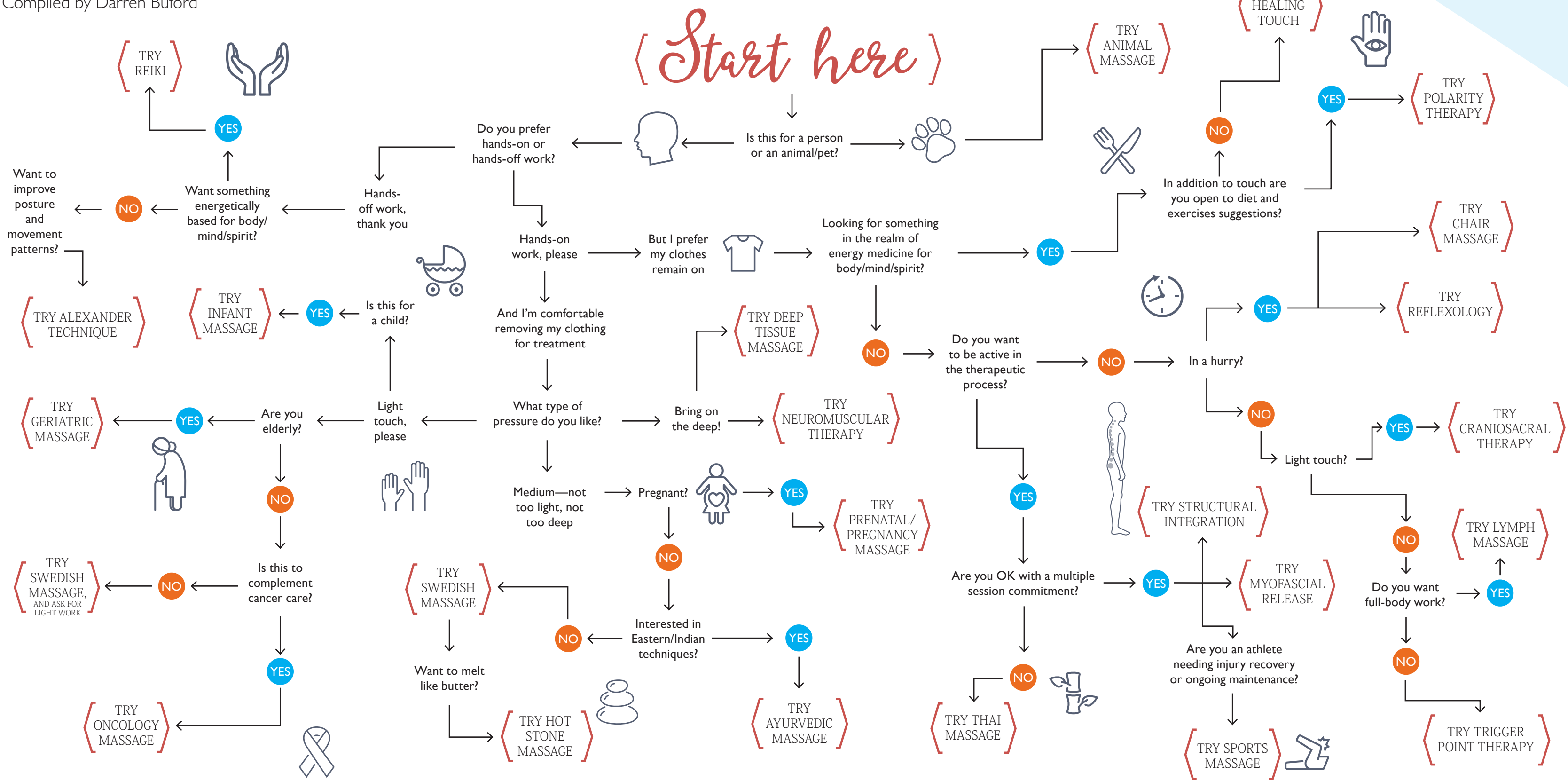


# What's Your Massage & Bodywork Style?

Try this fun approach to discovering the many types of therapeutic touch.

Compiled by Darren Buford



\* All techniques are not mutually exclusive. Many can be used in conjunction with one another. Also, several can be delivered to clothed or unclothed clients including geriatric, oncology, prenatal, and sports massage, among others.  
 \* Although not illustrated here, acupressure and aromatherapy can be combined with most modalities above. For more detailed definitions, visit [www.massagetherapy.com](http://www.massagetherapy.com).

TURN THE PAGE FOR DEFINITIONS OF THESE TYPES OF BODYWORK.



# Types of Massage & Bodywork

Compiled by  
Darren Buford

courtesy of  
**Associated Bodywork &  
Massage Professionals**  
www.abmp.com

## ACUPRESSURE

Uses the gentle but firm pressure of fingers, elbows, or feet to press key points on the surface of the skin to stimulate the body's natural self-curative abilities. When points are pressed, they release muscular tension and promote circulation of blood and the body's life force (*chi* or *qi*) to aid healing.

## ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

Movement education in which the student is taught to sit, stand, and move in ways that reduce physical stress. Teachers use gentle manual guidance and verbal cues to improve posture and movement patterns. Teacher's guidance stresses the adjustment of the head, neck, and torso relationship. At first, teachers closely monitor students. Later, students learn a self-management process.

## ANIMAL MASSAGE

Therapeutic massage provides relief, stimulates healing, and promotes stress reduction in both pets and competition animals. Benefits include enhancing performance by increasing range of motion, maintaining muscle tone and joint flexibility, increasing blood and lymph circulation, increasing oxygen to reduce muscle spasms, and improving disposition.

## AROMATHERAPY

Use of essential oils (extracted from herbs, flowers, resin, woods, and roots) to aid in relaxation, improve circulation, and help healing of wounds. Diffusers are used to fill the massage room with the scent of oils. Specific essential oils are added to carrier oils to be used during the massage. Each oil has its own unique characteristics and benefits.

## AYURVEDIC MASSAGE

Part of the traditional detoxification and rejuvenation program of India called *panchakarma*, in which large amounts of warm oil and herbs are vigorously massaged into the entire body or poured at specific energy points called *chakras*. Techniques can be done either as stand-alone treatments or in conjunction with a full-body massage.

## CHAIR MASSAGE

Involves the use of a specially designed massage chair the client sits comfortably in. Includes bodywork and somatic techniques, such as shiatsu, amma, and Swedish massage, provided to the fully clothed client in a variety of settings, including businesses, airports, and street fairs.

## CRANIOSACRAL THERAPY

A light-touch, noninvasive method of enhancing the craniosacral system, which consists of membranes and cerebrospinal fluid that surround and protect the brain and spinal cord. Encourages the body's natural healing mechanisms to improve functioning of the central nervous system, dissipate stress, and enhance health.

## DEEP-TISSUE MASSAGE

Administered to affect the sublayer of musculature and fascia. Helps with chronic muscular pain and injury rehabilitation and reduces inflammation-related pain caused by arthritis and tendinitis. Generally integrated with other massage techniques.

## GERIATRIC MASSAGE

Addresses the psychological and physiological aspects of aging and its associated diseases. Bodywork, often limited to a shorter time span, is often performed in residential care facilities and can be administered with the client in their wheelchair or bed, depending on their level of mobility.

## HEALING TOUCH

An energy-based therapeutic approach that uses touch to influence the energy system, thus affecting physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health, as well as healing. The goal is to restore harmony and balance in the energy system to help the person self-heal. The quality and impact of the healing is influenced by the relationship between the giver and receiver.

## HOT STONE MASSAGE

Use of smooth, heated stones as an extension of the practitioner's own hands to massage the body. The heat can provide relaxation benefits and bring relief to tight muscles so therapists can work deeper.

## LYMPH MASSAGE

Practitioners palpate the lymphatic flow (part of the circulatory system). Advanced practitioners map the lymphatic flow to find alternate pathways for drainage. Evolved from years of training in traditional medicine, Asian medical practices, and manual therapies.\*

## MYOFASCIAL RELEASE

Application of sustained pressure and movement into the body's fascial system to eliminate restrictions and emotional patterns that impede progress. Begins by visually analyzing the body's frame, followed by palpation of fascial layers. Gentle pressure is applied in the direction of restrictions. Effective for cervical and back pain, fibromyalgia, scoliosis, neurological dysfunction, and headaches.

## NEUROMUSCULAR THERAPY

Soft-tissue manipulation that balances the body's central nervous system with the musculoskeletal system. Based on neurological laws that explain how the central nervous system initiates and maintains pain, the goal is to help relieve pain and dysfunction by understanding and alleviating the underlying cause.

## ONCOLOGY MASSAGE

Massage tailored to the needs of individuals with cancer. Therapists pay close attention to the physical, emotional, and psychological needs of clients in all stages of cancer—diagnosis, treatment, recovery, survivor, or terminal—and include precautions for radiation, chemotherapy, and surgery, and cover physiology and pathology.

## POLARITY THERAPY

A clothes-on, noninvasive system complementing existing modalities with an integrated, holistic model. Based on the belief that positive and negative poles exist in every cell, the body is gently manipulated to balance the positive and negative energies. In addition to physical manipulation, blockages are eliminated through a cleansing diet and simple exercises.

## PRENATAL/PREGNANCY

Prenatally, specific techniques can reduce pregnancy discomforts and enhance the physiological and emotional well-being of mother and fetus. Facilitates labor, shortening labor times and easing pain and anxiety. In the postpartum period, rebalances structure, physiology, and emotions of the new mother and may help with mother-child bonding.

## REIKI

An energy healing art. Practitioners access and serve as a channel for life force (*chi* or *qi*) by placing their hands on or just above the client's body to activate healing energy within receptive points. Then they move progressively with a passive touch through 12 positions, remaining at each for 3–5 minutes. As the flow of energy is strengthened, healing occurs.

## REFLEXOLOGY

Involves application of pressure to specific reflex areas in the foot, hands, and ears that correspond to other parts of the body. Stimulates body organs and relieves areas of congestion through increased circulation of blood and lymphatic fluids. Works with the body's energy flow to stimulate self-healing and maintain body balance.

## SPORTS MASSAGE

Designed to enhance athletic performance and recovery pre-event, post-event, and for injury treatment. Often delivered at the performance site, with the athlete fully clothed. Pre-event: fast-paced and stimulating; helps to establish blood flow and warm up muscles. Post-event: the intent is to calm the nervous system and reduce recovery time.

## STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION

A 10-session cycle of work in which different angles and degrees of physical pressure are used to stretch and guide the myofascial system—the ligaments, muscles, tendons, and surrounding connective tissues—to a place of easier movement. The goal is to create a more resilient, higher-energy system, free of inhibitions due to past trauma.

## SWEDISH MASSAGE

The most well-known, practiced, and experienced massage modality. Designed to energize the body by stimulating circulation. Five basic strokes, all flowing toward the heart, are used to manipulate the soft tissues of the body. Therapists use a combination of kneading, rolling, vibrational, percussive, and tapping movements, with the application of oil.

## THAI MASSAGE

Practiced on a firm mat on the floor instead of on a table, and instrumental in the effective use of the practitioner's body weight. Except for the feet, the client remains fully clothed. Also involves peripheral stimulating, meaning it acts as an external stimulant to produce specific internal effects. This point serves as the main division between Thai and Western massage.

## TRIGGER POINT MYOTHERAPY

Noninvasive modality for the relief of myofascial pain and dysfunction. Consists of trigger-point compression, myomassage, passive stretching, and corrective exercises. Intended to reduce pain and increase range of motion, strength, and endurance.

\*Definition provided by The Upledger Institute. Unless otherwise noted, abbreviated definitions come from [www.massagetherapy.com](http://www.massagetherapy.com).