

Body Sense

autumn 2015 massage, bodywork & healthy living

The Changing Seasons of Bodywork

3 Steps to Mindful Meditation

Why Your Glutes Deserve Bodywork

PLUS

The Effectiveness of Soft-Tissue Therapies

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EDITOR'S NOTE

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Fall of the Leaf

I love trivia, so when we began work on this issue, I just had to know: why does our beloved third season have two names?

In brief, *autumn*, derived from the French *autumne*—replacing the more general term *harvest* previously used to describe the season—dates back to the 12th and 13th centuries, and is more preferred today by the British. *Fall*, on the other hand, comes from the phrases “fall of the leaf” and “fall of the year,” dates to the 16th century, originated in Middle English, and is more preferred today by North Americans.

“Fall of the leaf/year” poetically describes the visible changes we see in our weather, doesn’t it? It also aptly represents our emotional transition during this period. There’s an implied delicacy. The beginning of the end. We are reminded by falling leaves and the air’s crispness to slow down, rejigger our monkey minds, and calm our bodies.

One way to shift our minds is with meditation. In this issue, author Amy Andrews McMaster teaches us in “Mindful Meditation” that by dialing back and being fully present in the moment we can truly practice *being* rather than *doing*.

But what about our bodies? We also can prepare them for the cooler months ahead by using massage and bodywork as a conduit to become more attuned. In “The Changing Seasons of Bodywork,” author Cindy Williams shows us that welcoming different forms of bodywork into our health-care regimen can help us achieve optimal support for our seasonal wellness.

Regardless of whether you prefer *autumn* or *fall*, we hope you enjoy this issue of *Body Sense* and couple the beautiful foliage with our ever-learning bodies and minds.



Body Sense Editor Darren Buford



Do you view massage as a luxury or an integral part of health and wellness?*

78%

Massage is preventive health care and is just as important as getting regular dental and doctor checkups.

*Results from www.massagetherapy.com poll.



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Which word do you use: *fall* or *autumn*?

fall

autumn

both



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What is Soft-Tissue Release?

Soft-tissue release (STR) is an injury treatment technique developed in Europe with the world's fastest sprinters. STR deals directly with the reasons for soft-tissue dysfunctions and subsequent referred pain and nerve entrapment. In acute conditions, STR affects the way scar tissue is formed, and in chronic conditions, STR breaks up the fibrotic and adhered mass of scar tissue to quickly allow the muscle to return to its natural resting length. The client is placed in a particular position so that the muscle begins to stretch in a very specific direction or plane. When the location of the injury has been defined, pressure is applied directly into the affected tissue or along a specific line of injury. At the same time, the client is given a set of instructions that engage the antagonist of the muscles involved. The muscle is extended from a fixed position in a determined direction under a pinpoint of pressure.

Use the therapist finder at www.massagetherapy.com/find/index.php to find a neuromuscular therapist near you.

Definition from www.massagetherapy.com, "Glossary of Massage and Bodywork Techniques."



Improve Your Cardio with Interval Training

Interval training allows you to reap the cardiovascular fitness benefits of aerobic training in less time, according to *Harvard Men's Health Watch*.

What exactly is interval training? It's simply alternating between short bursts of high-intensity exercise and brief periods of rest or less intense activity. Exercising in this manner allows you to reach your target heart

rate (the "aerobic zone") faster than you would in steady moderate-intensity training.

Harvard Men's Health Watch gives three examples of interval training:

- **Swimming.** Swim one lap as fast as you can. Rest for about the same time as it took you to swim the lap. Repeat.
- **Walking.** Walk as fast as you can for a minute or two. Then, walk at a leisurely pace for the same period. Repeat.
- **Gym machines.** Treadmills, elliptical trainers, and stationary cycles often have a built-in interval training function to put you through your paces.

Read the full article at www.health.harvard.edu/exercise-and-fitness/interval-training-for-a-stronger-heart.

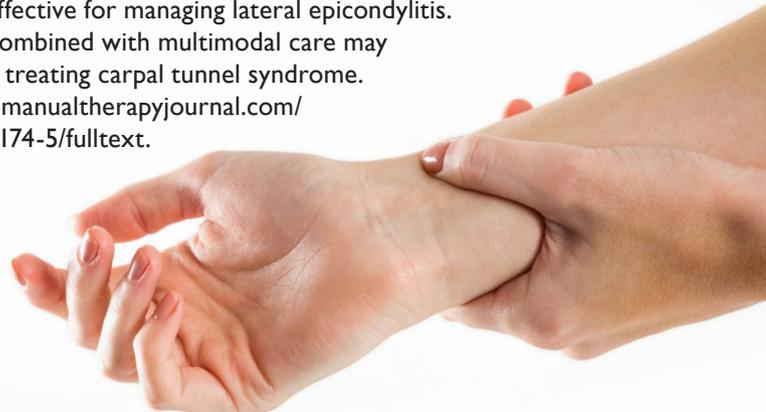
More Evidence for the Effectiveness of Soft-Tissue Therapies

A systematic review published in *Manual Therapy* found that manual soft-tissue therapies are effective in treating certain musculoskeletal disorders and injuries, including carpal tunnel syndrome, lateral epicondylitis, and plantar fasciitis.

The review critically appraised seven articles published between 1990 and 2015, with the purpose of clarifying the role of soft-tissue therapies in the management of upper and lower extremity musculoskeletal disorders and injuries. The review concluded that:

- Myofascial release therapy was effective for treating lateral epicondylitis and plantar fasciitis.
- Movement re-education was effective for managing lateral epicondylitis.
- Localized relaxation massage combined with multimodal care may provide short-term benefit for treating carpal tunnel syndrome.

Read the full review at www.manualtherapyjournal.com/article/S1356-689X%2815%2900174-5/fulltext.





The Changing Seasons of Bodywork

By Cindy Williams

We are nature. Whether one looks to traditional Chinese medicine, ayurveda, Tibetan medicine, or traditional Native American healing ceremonies, one common thread is that we are not separate from the natural world.

Just as the sun rises and sets, the moon waxes and wanes, and the seasons shift from warm springs to hot summers, and from cool autumns to cold winters, so do human beings fluctuate in ongoing cycles of change. Even in climates with less ebb and flow on the temperature spectrum, there are still wet and dry seasons, and human beings are intimately intertwined with them on a basic biological level.

While this may not be news, how many of us are truly aware of how these environmental fluctuations affect us and our health? Even if we do recognize that our health is affected, how many of us alter our patterns to support our alignment with the rhythms of nature? Perhaps we drink more warm beverages as the autumn begins to whip around cool, crisp air. That one is pretty simple. But, have you considered that even the type of bodywork you receive might need to be revised when looking for optimal support of your wellness through seasonal transitions?



HEAT IT UP!

If you have joint problems or a previous injury, you likely do not need convincing that the body has different needs in autumn and winter than in spring and summer. Unfortunately, the scientific evidence of how weather and temperature affect joints and other body aches is conflicting, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating. If the weather is cooler and you apply warm, moist heat to a chronic aching joint, in most cases you will experience soothing relief.

So what does this mean for your bodywork session? How about trying **heated stone massage; hydrotherapy treatments**, such as moist heated towels, a warm foot bath, or moist hot packs; or **paraffin wax treatments** for providing relief to specific aching joints? While dry heat feels good, moist heat can more easily penetrate body tissues, providing better movement of fluids into, out of, and around the body's cells. With freer movement of fluids in the body, there is optimal chance of circulating fresh, oxygenated, and nutrient-rich blood, as well as lymphatic fluid to boost your immunity.



MOVE IT UP!

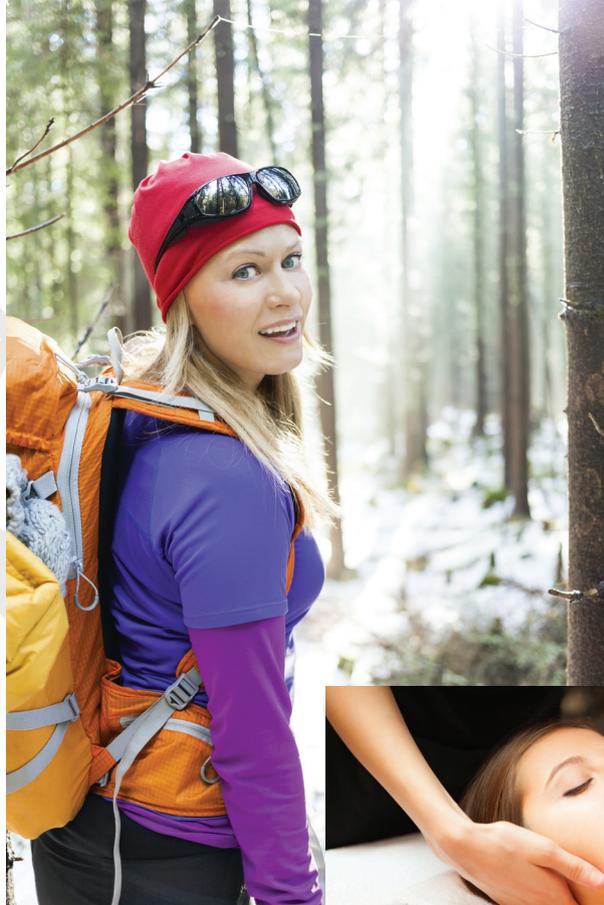
The lymphatic system is possibly the least understood system of the body and yet it is a cornerstone to staying healthy throughout the year. This system removes waste from every cell of the body, in addition to creating cells that specialize in fighting foreign microorganisms (a.k.a. germs). One of the natural biological changes that occurs in the body during cooler months is an increase in the production of specialized cells that circulate in your body like little police officers looking for law breakers or intruders. The problem is, lymphatic fluid (and any fluid in the body except for blood moving away from the heart) is circulated by mechanical movement, primarily muscle contraction. In cooler temperatures, we tend toward hibernation rather than motivation, so while the body's processes are ready to rock and roll, most people don't support those mechanisms appropriately.

So, what can you do to support yourself through bodywork? Well, the simple answer is to move!

Find **exercises** you can do inside or outside; it doesn't matter as long as you are moving. Even taking a walk encourages lymphatic function, as does yoga or jumping on a small trampoline.

However, another excellent approach is to find a practitioner who is trained to offer **manual lymphatic drainage therapy**. There are specific protocols that can be used to move lymph fluid through lymph vessels toward lymph nodes. Lymph nodes are essentially filters, so moving the fluid toward the body's filters helps to stave off colds and flus, while also enhancing your energy and vitality. Imagine not changing your car's fuel, air, or oil filters. Your car would be pretty sluggish and not run optimally, causing you to take it into the mechanic sooner than you'd like. Your body is no different.

So, what can you do to support yourself through bodywork? Well, the simple answer is to move!



STIR IT UP!

If your bodywork sessions tend to be slow-paced and soothing, which is great for cooling the body and slowing down during the flurry of summer activities, cool weather provides an excellent reason to stir things up! While some might have the perspective that we should hibernate with the bears in the autumn and winter seasons. Indeed it is valuable to slow things down to be in rhythm with this darker phase of the year. It is also helpful to try bodywork styles that focus on body movement as a primary source of stress and tension relief in order to be in balance.

Deane Juhan, author of *Job's Body: A Handbook for Bodywork* (Barrytown/Station Hill Press, 2003), explains, "Connective tissue shares with many other gels a phenomenon called **thixotropy**: it becomes more fluid when it is stirred up and more solid when it sits without being disturbed. Skillful manipulation (manual therapy) simply raises energy levels and creates a greater degree of fluidity in organic systems that are already there, but are behaving sluggishly. The effect can be analogous to that of turning up the temperature and humidity in a greenhouse that has been too dry and cold."



There are some excellent bodywork modalities you can seek out to facilitate this kind of internal stirring and fluidity. Examples are: the **Trager Method**, which utilizes gentle, passive body movement to release deep physical, mental, and emotional patterns in the body while the client is clothed; **Thai yoga** massage, in which the client is also fully clothed and is moved in specific passive yoga *asanas*—or postures—in order to free up stagnate energy and blood/lymph flow along designated meridians in the body; or a brisk form of **Swedish massage**, where the client is disrobed and appropriately draped while the practitioner uses fast-paced strokes toward the heart in order to enhance the body’s circulatory processes and induce warmth through friction of, and with, the tissues. As previously noted, inducing heat, movement, and circulation are all key factors in supporting the body’s natural processes designed to keep us healthy, happy, and vital on all levels, especially in the colder months.

EAT IT UP!

Finally, one of the best ways to stay in alignment with our natural resources is to eat foods that are in season in the region we live. There is a reason why squash grows in certain climates and at certain times of year. Are strawberries growing in your yard in the winter? If you live in a cold-winter climate, likely not. So why eat them? As we live in our unique environments, be they four distinct seasons or two primary seasons with shorter transitions, your body adapts to its environment and will be best served by eating seasonally. Combine that with adequate hydration and sprinkling in some season-specific bodywork, and you are guaranteed vitality no matter how many hours the sun shines. 

Cindy Williams has served the massage profession as a practitioner, school administrator, instructor, curriculum developer, and mentor since 2000. She enjoys the challenge of blending structure with creative flow to provide balance in her classroom, bodywork practice, and life.



ASK THE EXPERTS



Q. “If I’m sick, have an illness, or have a contagious condition, should I receive massage or bodywork?”

A. Please do yourself and your therapist a favor and reschedule your appointment if you’re sick. If you receive massage or bodywork while you’re contagious, you run the risk of passing that sickness on to your therapist; in turn, he may unknowingly pass it on to all his other clients. It’s better for you to focus on giving your immune system the rest it needs to fight the illness. Your body (and your therapist) will thank you!



Massage Therapist/Educator,
Kristin Coverly, LMT



Skin Care Educator/
Product Developer/
Therapist/Author,
Mark Lees, PhD,
MS, CIDESCO

Q. “With the seasons changing and the weather becoming cooler, what should I know about protecting my skin?”

A. Extreme cold and windy weather can strip the skin of intercellular lipids, allowing it to become dry, rough, and cracked. To counteract this: (1) discontinue use of detergent cleansers; instead, use low- or no-foaming cleansers; (2) use moisturizers that contain lipid ingredients called ceramides; (3) limit exposure to exfoliating products or drugs; and (4) use sunscreen when exposed to the environment.





By Karrie Osborn

{ The All-Important Glutes }

You may not realize this, but your gluteal muscles—those that make up your derrière—affect nearly every movement you make.

Many massage clients only seek out gluteal massage work when they have a specific issue—a tight hamstring, for example. But you might want to think more broadly if you want to maintain your overall physical health. The truth is, dysfunctional gluteal muscles can be tied to low-back pain, shoulder issues, even foot and ankle problems.

WHY THE GLUTES?

Receiving massage work on your gluteal muscles is critical for several reasons. Consider your glutes as the force that connects your upper and lower body. As such, it impacts everything above and below it. “Working on the gluteals should not be confined to just clinical therapeutic work,” says bodywork educator and Certified Advanced Rolfer Art Riggs. “It should also be included in any full-body massage as a way to integrate the important connection—energetically and structurally—between the client’s lower and upper body.”



What Are The Glutes?

The gluteal group is comprised of three muscles: the gluteus maximus, gluteus medius, and gluteus minimus. These muscles stabilize the pelvis and spine and create powerful movement at the hip joint. As a group, they affect our posture and gait, and are crucial to most movements we make throughout the day.

- The **gluteus maximus** is the largest, and one of the strongest, muscles in the body. It creates the shape of the posterior and is responsible for movement of the hip and thigh.
- Under the maximus is the **gluteus medius**, a fan-shaped muscle that works to stabilize your walking gait, among many other functions.
- Finally, the **gluteus minimus** sits underneath the medius, and is the smallest and deepest of the group. It works in tandem with the gluteus medius to create critical movements.

WHAT DOES GLUTE WORK LOOK LIKE?

The way massage therapists approach your glutes is no different than how they address any other part of your body, with the exception of some additional draping considerations. And, as with any other part of your body, your therapist may work your gluteal muscles with his or her forearms, knuckles, or elbows, and utilize techniques like pin-and-stretch, kneading, acupressure, cross-fiber friction, and traditional Swedish massage strokes. Therapists addressing these muscles are looking to not only strengthen the gluteals, but to relax and align them, too.

DRAPED OR UNDRAPED?

There are two ways to address the gluteal muscles in your massage session. Some massage therapists prefer to work the glutes through a sheet, allowing them to use a more aggressive therapeutic approach on the muscle group. Other therapists prefer working on exposed skin, using a secure gluteal drape, to really meet the tissue head-on. And some therapists incorporate both ways of addressing these strong, dense muscles.

As with any massage or bodywork session, the client maintains control of his or her own body. If you want to leave your underwear on during a massage session, you are more than welcome to do so. Therapists will still be able to address your gluteal muscles, although clothing can inhibit the quality of the therapist's work. Regardless, your therapist will be able to adjust his or her technique to accommodate your modesty needs.



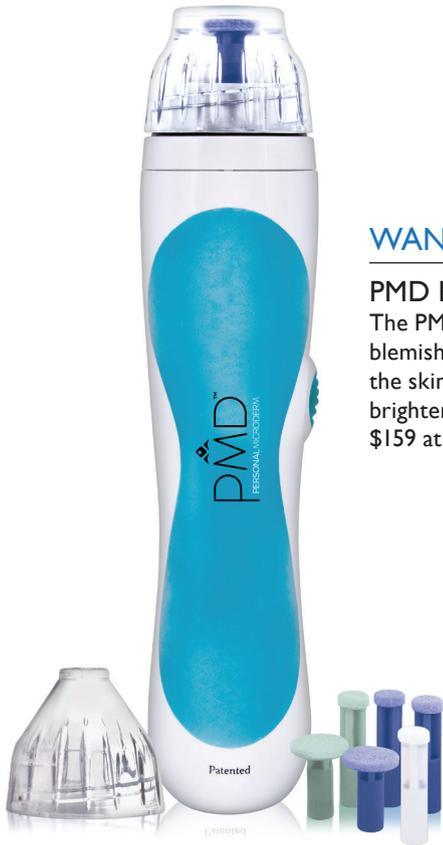
*Karrie Osborn is
senior editor for
Body Sense.*

SPEAK UP

Finally, while your gluteal muscles should not be ignored, you might find that in some sessions you're not comfortable with work in that area. At any time you can ask your therapist to stop what she's working on and move elsewhere. This applies to any part of your massage and at any point during your session. You can also discuss your goals with the therapist before the session begins. Remember, you're in charge during your massage session, so don't hesitate to speak up if the pressure is too deep or not deep enough, if the room is too warm or too cold, or if you'd rather he not work your glutes (or your feet, or your face, or ...) that particular day.

Our gluteal muscles are more important than we might think, and although they spend a lot of their time being sat on, their role in the human body is integral and complex. In your next massage session, make sure they get the attention they deserve! 📣





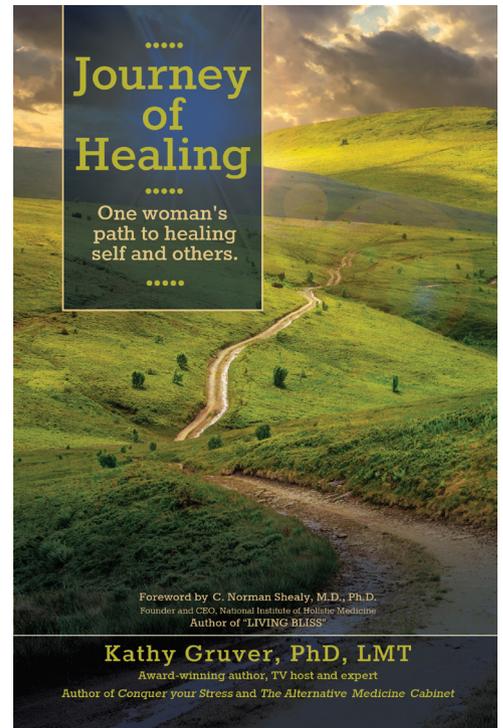
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By Amy Andrews McMaster



Mindful meditation is the practice of learning to focus fully on the present moment. This simple practice requires effort and discipline because it is the mind's nature to wander, vacillating between what happened in the past (and the meaning we make of those experiences) and what we want to happen in the future (including our to-do lists, goals, and plans). Mindful meditation is a way to become aware of the habits of the mind—with openness and curiosity instead of judgment.

To live a meaningful life, we need to feel in control of our responses and trust in our own ability to behave in ways that have integrity and bring happiness. Victor Frankl, a physiologist and Holocaust survivor, writes in *Man's Search for Meaning* (Beacon Press, 2006), "Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."

When someone cuts us off in traffic or drives in a way that we find reckless (stimulus), the event can trigger a response. When we feel threatened, even in seemingly small ways, our limbic brain (driven by survival) typically takes over. Without thinking, we can react to the stimulus with anger or rage, behaving in ways that are directed by those feelings instead of by the freedom of choice. By contrast, if we can learn to carve out just a moment of space after that stimulus, we can feel the anger in our body and choose our response to be rooted in our own personal power, integrity, and freedom.

Mindful meditation helps us grow that space between stimulus and response. The practice slows down the flash reactions that otherwise erupt in our daily lives. We should enter into this practice with no agenda, simply sitting with, and holding space for, our experience.

Step 1: Get Comfortable

Find a position in which you feel relaxed and alert. Beginners may feel comfortable lying on the floor with blankets, bolsters, or yoga mats. An eye covering may also be grounding, as it removes the stimulus of light. If you choose to sit on a folded blanket or meditation cushion, the spine should be aligned: shoulders over hips, ears over shoulders, chin parallel with the floor, and hips positioned high enough so that the knees can relax toward the floor.

Step 2: Be Present

Settle in and find an anchor in the present moment. I prefer to focus on the breath, to notice the sensation of the inhalation, the exhalation, and the space in between. As you sit, just notice whatever arises. Once you are comfortable and have connected with an anchor in the present moment, there is actually nothing else to do. The practice is just to be, with awareness in the present moment, without judgment.

Step 3: Come Back to the Present Moment

Inevitably, your mind will wander. When this happens, label your thoughts—saying "thinking" to yourself is one method—and return to the sensation of breathing. By reconnecting to your breath, you can again sit in the role of the observer, witnessing the moments move by. When distractions arise, you gently touch the thought or feeling by labeling it and return again to the moment.

A helpful analogy is to see your clear mind as the bright blue sky and the thoughts that pass by as puffy white clouds. Sometimes you drift for a while on a cozy cloud. Sometimes you notice a white cloud but can still see the clear blue sky.

BEING INSTEAD OF DOING

Many of my students are surprised at how difficult it can be to sit for even a few minutes in mindful meditation.

Noticing how the mind jumps from thought to thought can seem overwhelming. Give yourself permission to have a sense of humor at the monkey mind jumping around in your head: "Wow, it's so busy!"

Try to sit or recline for 5–10 minutes. Then, let it go and try again another day. Use soft, relaxing music if that helps. Or try guided meditations from YouTube or a CD. Let go of the pressure to do it "right."

Mindful meditation is kind of like doing bicep curls for your brain. Slowly, you become stronger at returning to the present moment. Your mind wanders and you help it return. You practice *being* instead of *doing*. Over time, you see more clearly what is really happening in the present moment and you are no longer a slave to impulses and habitual patterns. You really can find space and freedom and ease just by learning how to settle into your own experience. 

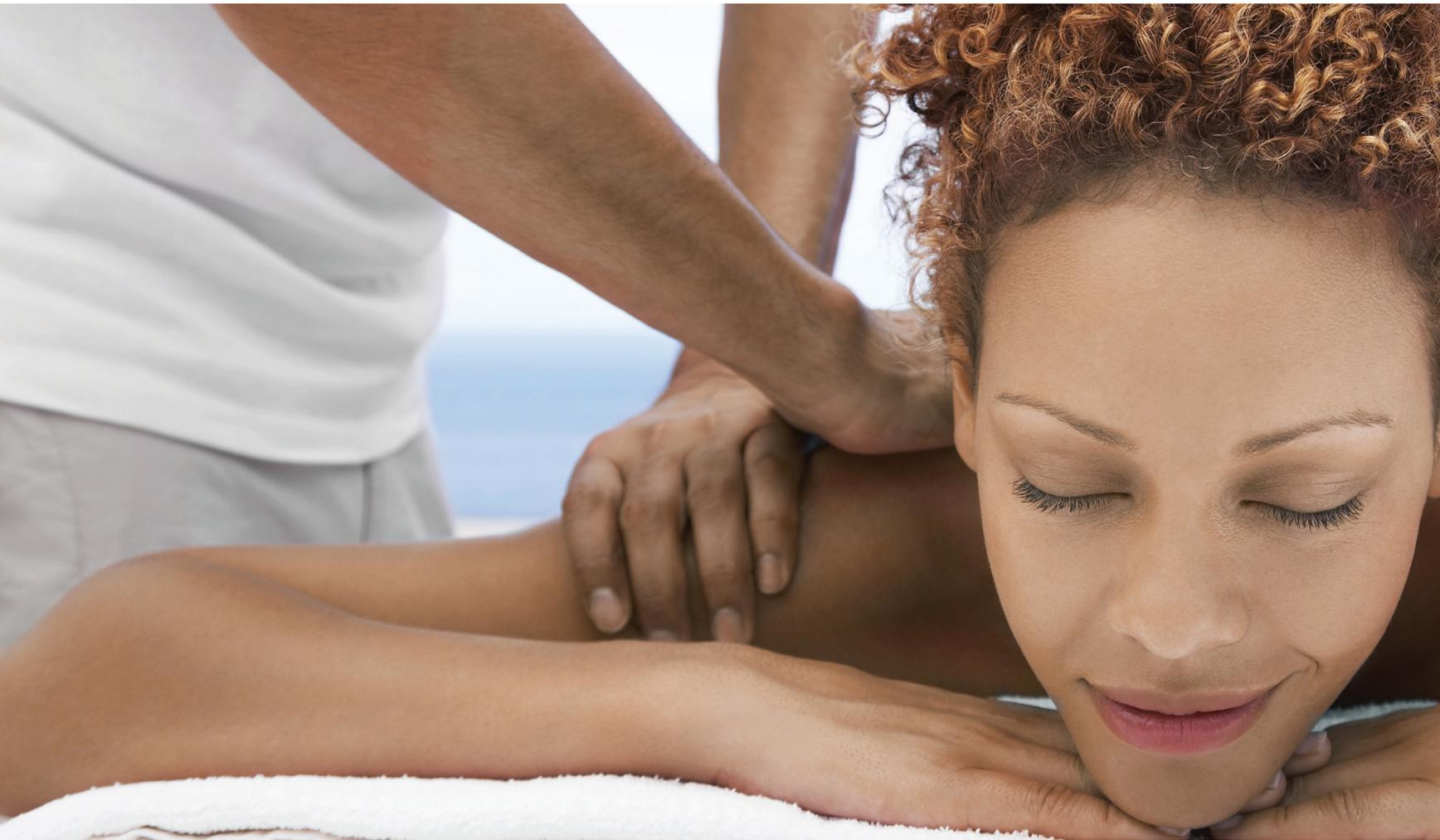
Amy Andrews McMaster offers integrated mindfulness programs through Conscious Time, www.conscioustime.com. She is dedicated to helping people reduce stress, improve relationships, and live empowered lives.



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