

The Human Touch

Dr. David J. Lincoln examines the therapeutic practice of massage



Massage by a cow?

"To me luxury is to be at home with my daughter, and the occasional massage doesn't hurt."

Olivia Newton-John

One of the many activities commonly available on beaches around Goa, beach massage involves getting the entire body covered in coconut oil whilst relaxing in the sun. There is no denying that this creates a 'feel good' sensation but whether these massages are beneficial to health is questionable. The activity seems more sensual than therapeutic.

Real massage is the practice of soft tissue manipulation with physical (anatomical), functional (physiological), and in some cases psychological purposes and goals. The word comes from the French 'massage' meaning "friction of kneading", or from Arabic 'massa' meaning "to touch, feel or handle" or from Latin 'massa' meaning "mass, dough". An older etymology may even have been the Hebrew 'me-sakj' which means "to anoint with oil". In distinction, the ancient Greek word for massage was 'anatripsis' and the Latin was 'frictio'.

Massage involves acting on and manipulating

the body with pressure – structured, unstructured, stationary, or moving – tension, motion, or vibration, done manually or with mechanical aids. Target tissues may include muscles, tendons, ligaments, skin, joints, or other connective tissue, as well as lymphatic vessels, or organs of the gastrointestinal system. Massage can be applied with the hands, fingers, elbows, knees, forearm, and feet. There are over eighty different recognized massage modalities and a lot of these can be found in Goa. In professional settings, massage involves the client being treated while lying on a massage table, sitting in a massage chair, or lying on a mat on the floor. The massage subject may be fully or partly unclothed. Parts of the body may be covered with towels or sheets.

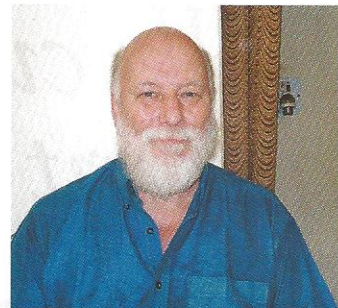
Massage is a major part of many healing modalities such as Naturopathy, Traditional Chinese Medicine and Ayurvedic Medicine. Massage is often prescribed

as part of a treatment protocol. Most massages would include a prescription for special herbs and oils etc. Among some of the more advanced forms of massage are physiotherapy, lymphatic drainage massage and osteopathy.

Massage generally has a negative connotation when associated with the phrase ‘massage parlour’, and like everywhere else in the world, this phrase is avoided by genuine establishments that offer therapeutic massages.

Other traditional massage techniques native to India include head and face massages which are often available in barber shops and hair dressing parlours. Whilst in Goa, do try and enjoy many of the various massages available.

Dr. David J. Lincoln can be contacted at: psychologist@therapist.net



Dr. David J Lincoln BSc PhD is a consultant clinical psychologist and a certified hypnotherapist, Reiki Master and Neuro-Linguistic Practitioner. No stranger to complementary therapies, Dr. David has written a number of articles and books on the subject including ‘A Confusion of Therapies (A-Z list of therapies)’. Now, a life coach and a mentor, he has worked and travelled to many countries while carrying out research on the mind-body connection.



A beach massage accompanied by the sounds of the sea and the somnolence of the sun can be truly relaxing



A Thai massage booth in one of Goa's local night markets

‘Massage gives parents a special tool. You can really calm a cranky baby with this; babies sleep deeper and longer after massage, and it can also give relief from colic, gas, teething pain, and chest congestion.’

Jill Vyse

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Contact:

Dr. Anupama Kathyayani @
9011035444