

The Importance of Knowledge©

Knowledge can do wonders for increasing confidence and self regard, not to mention deftness at being able to help others. Here is my story:

About this time 10 years ago I was well on my way to making a 13-year-old dream come true: working with the Sonics. The dream was born in 1979 when the Sonics won the World Championship, but I wouldn't take any action until 1987. Thus began a grueling, nerve-wracking five-year journey of waylaying players after games, asking them to try massage. Have you ever wanted something so much you are petrified to ask and have the answer be NO? With a few exceptions, that's just what happened: most weren't interested.

In 1991 I joined the AMTA to pass the Sports Massage Certification Exam, thinking that if I wanted to massage athletes I'd better know the body of information that the AMTA deemed necessary. I became aware of massage increasing the recovery rate of injury and this approach produced more interest from the players. I would finally attain my dream, getting invited into the locker room to provide post event massage for the 1992 playoffs!! Such ELATION!! However, the injury approach would ultimately be my undoing. Have you ever heard that a little bit of knowledge can be dangerous?

Over the next 2 years I returned to the locker room for training camp and playoffs, but still wasn't invited during the season. So, I managed to arrange my downfall by trying to convince the trainer of the efficacy of massage regarding injuries. This was something I knew intuitively; it made sense for massage to be beneficial, but I didn't really know why or how, so I began experimenting. Unfortunately, anyone making a broad claim without a solid base of knowledge and too much enthusiasm does not get taken seriously. I was vulnerable because of gaps in my knowledge and an inability to speak with enough credibility to be believed. For the 1994 playoffs I was replaced by someone who had more credentials than I, though less massage experience. I was devastated and heartbroken: my dream was over before I got to finish it. It was a tremendous blow to both my personal and professional pride, not to mention my confidence.

There was only one way to mend myself, and that was to shore up my foundation of knowledge. I knew what I wanted to learn; it was challenging but incredibly valuable and would be a skill that few LMPs had acquired: Rich Phaigh's Onsen Technique. Basically you learn to assess exactly what's going on with a patient's structure (pelvis & spine) and then use MET to correct deviations. This is HUGE, it's what osteopaths are trained in, and Rich Phaigh developed a protocol so that massage therapists can do it. It's pretty technical as far as palpation skills go, and can be overwhelming because of the sheer number of facts and rules to keep track of, but it literally "gets to the bottom of things" to isolate and alleviate sources of pain. I liked learning this because it is based on logical progression: assess a deviation, make the appropriate correction, and then re-assess to confirm what was accomplished.

I proceeded to take Onsen Technique from Rich Phaigh in June of 1994, but because of lost confidence I wouldn't even try it. Still, knowing its value, I repeated the class numerous times including January of last year when Rich retired from teaching. Fortunately, there are a few students of his that can't let this truly helpful body of knowledge go by the wayside. Also fortunately, after all this time my mind actually knows it, so I became one of the instructors (Seattle). There is another in Idaho, a couple in Canada and one in Australia. We divide the information into four separate classes with a breather between each so students can try it out on one part of the body at a time, get results, and be reinforced to keep using it. Also, I like to keep my classes small so that a few people can really learn it, rather than having a lot of people who will never use it.

I had a conversation the other day with an LMP. She brought me her boyfriend who had been in multiple motorcycle accidents and I showed her how we go about investigating and correcting. He is so much better after one treatment that she wants to take my class in February. So, have I got any other takers? Would anyone like to help someone by straightening their torsioned, tilted or rotated sacrum? How about that trouble-causing joint at L4/L5, or that big C curve in someone's spine? Or better yet, how would you like to rotate C6 back where it belongs, so someone can stop feeling tingling and numbness down their

arm into their thumb and first two fingers? Maybe you'd just like to identify which rotator cuff muscle in the shoulder has the tendonitis and be able to fix that. This may sound daunting, but how do you eat an elephant? One bite and a time, right?

Alleviating pain with this unique skill is highly rewarding -- even more so if I can pass it along, together with the sense of pride and confidence that follows. It feels pretty good from here!

~ Julie Bacon