

Hanging Out in the Grey Zone

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dede dancing, LMT

I'm talking here about the "grey zone" as a place of uncertainty where things are really neither *this* nor *that*. Like March is neither winter nor spring, but is *some of each*. When it comes to helping people feel better, and so many other things in this life, that zone is where we live. It is often the *synergy* of improved nutrition, exercise, hydration, massage, chiropractic care, talking, laughing, and crying that brings health to a body. Sometimes medications are part of that synergy.

The fact that every body is different makes it important for you to rely heavily on your own sense of what's right for you...something that might :) or might not :(be encouraged in your doctor's office.

Massage therapy, as I've said before, is a healing thing. But we don't really know why. Or how. We don't know what all is affected by the work, or what all the effects are. There's a vast array of philosophies, theories, and techniques developed by generations of bodyworkers with a variety of goals. The maneuvers work differently when performed *on* different people and *by* different people. So. When we work together in my studio we are hanging out in that grey zone, and I'm taking my cues from you.

That said—there is new information about why and how massage helps bodies heal.

Mark Tarnopolsky, a neurometabolic researcher at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada suffered a severe hamstring injury in a waterskiing accident 4 years ago. Massage therapy was part of his rehabilitation regimen, and was so effective at easing his pain that he became determined to track down the mechanism that made him feel so good. "I thought there has to be a physiologic basis for this," he says. "And being a cellular scientist, my interest's in the cellular basis."

His research ([Science Translational Medicine](#) Feb. 2012, links below) showed massaged tissue had 30% more of a gene that helps muscle cells build mitochondria—organelles that provide energy for all the cell's activities—and 3 less NFkB, a substance that "turns on" genes associated with inflammation.

Tarnopolsky says: "There's no question I'm going to be visiting the massage therapist more often."

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Less Technical: <http://news.sciencemag.org/sciencenow/2012/02/massages-mystery-mechanism-unmas.html?ref=hp>

More Technical: <http://stm.sciencemag.org/content/4/119/119ra13.abstract>

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