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MAGAZINE

STEP OUT OF THE BOX!

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Oprah talks to **HER HERO**

The awesome, inspiring, noble **NELSON MANDELA**

A VACATION FROM YOUR FACE

Could you go a few days without a mirror?

Plus: **WHAT WOMEN CAN LEARN FROM**



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Touched by angels

O's guide to healing hands. BY SUZANNE B. GLEASON

SUPPOSE YOU COULD EASE FATIGUE, STRESS, AND CHRONIC PAIN without the usual crutches (a double espresso to rev up in the morning, an after-work cocktail to settle down, and regular doses of ibuprofen to take the edge off a sore back). A growing body of research—much of it from the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami School of Medicine in Florida—suggests that relief for many common ailments may be at your fingertips or, more accurately, in the hands of a skilled massage therapist or bodywork specialist. As a result, medical doctors now prescribe massage for everything from high blood pressure to asthma to anorexia, and some insurance companies actually cover these treatments. What can massage do for you? If you suffer from any of the following conditions (just turn the page), you now have the best rationale of all for indulging in an hour of heavenly kneading: You're doing it for your health. ▶

TENSION; MINOR ACHES AND PAINS We hunch over our desks, carry heavy shoulder bags, lead frenetic lives—no wonder we're so stressed. Sweeping, rhythmic **Swedish massage** (probably the method most readily accessible in this country) not only feels great but also stimulates circulation and speeds the elimination of lactic acid, a metabolic waste product that clings to aching muscles and keeps them sore. Duration: 30 to 60 minutes. Cost: \$30 to \$100 an hour. Available at most health clubs and spas. Another means to the same end, the **Trager Approach** literally rocks away tension: Cradling parts of your body in her hands, the practitioner uses nonintrusive movements (like gentle rocking or shaking) to loosen muscles and increase your range of motion. Duration: 60 to 90 minutes. Cost: \$45 to \$65. More info: The Trager Institute, 216-896-9383; www.trager.com.

HEADACHES AND MIGRAINES Having your cerebral spinal fluid manipulated through the head may not sound like a particularly soothing proposition. But **Cranio-Sacral Therapy**—often associated with the pioneering work of osteopath John E. Upledger in the 1970s—is an intensely relaxing way to relieve recurring head pain. (Some research suggests an 80 to 90 percent success rate for chronic headache conditions.) In a typical session,

MASSAGE PROTOCOL

What to wear: Keep your undergarments on if that makes you feel more comfortable, but take off any clothes with zippers, buttons, or snaps. Whatever you're wearing, the practitioner should always keep you draped with a sheet for modesty and warmth, exposing only the area being worked on (this is the law in many states).

When to speak up: If you know up front that you'd prefer a same-sex practitioner, say so when you make the appointment. During the session, don't suffer in silence if you're not happy with the lighting, music, temperature, or level of pressure.

How much to tip: Fifteen to 20 percent of the cost is standard after any kind of massage. Just make sure the gratuity hasn't already been included in the price.

you feel a pleasantly warm sensation as mild pressure is applied to your head, neck, and spinal column. Duration: 45 to 60 minutes. Cost: \$40 to \$150. More info: The Upledger Institute, 800-233-5880; www.upledger.com.

PMS Do you turn into a total head case every month? In a controlled study published in the medical journal *Obstetrics &*

Gynecology, standard premenstrual complaints like irritability, bloating, and cramps were reduced by as much as 46 percent in women who underwent eight weekly **reflexology** sessions. This popular therapy uses gentle, targeted pressure on nerve endings in the feet, hands, and outer ears—points that correlate with specific organs of the body. Researchers theorize that the treatment may help restore balance to an out-of-whack body under siege from hormonal surges. Duration: 30 to 60 minutes. Cost: \$30 to \$90. Now available at most spas and natural-health centers.

CHRONIC PAIN Years of getting out of a chair improperly or sleeping with your neck scrunched up can leave you hurting. What may help: **Rolfing**, a technique that retrains the way you move and hold your body. Expect to sign up for ten consecutive sessions, spaced a week or two apart, during which vigorous corrective hand or elbow pressure is often used to nudge your body out of its postural habits. You may feel pain as a tight muscle is "stretched," but this is followed by a wonderful sense of release. Duration: 60 minutes. Cost: \$75 to \$125. More info: The Rolf Institute, 800-530-8875; www.rolf.org. •

Suzanne B. Gleason is a beauty, health, and fitness writer who lives in New York City.

Different Strokes From the massage avant-garde, four of the newest ways to get soothed

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE, but there was a time when Swedish massage seemed positively exotic to most Americans. And just three or four years ago, nobody had heard of hot-stone massage, a sublime treatment using heated river rocks. Now it's so popular that you often have to book months in advance. Which massage will conquer the spa world next? We're betting on these four relative unknowns to deliver the most *aaaaaaah* for your investment.

For a **CASCADE MASSAGE**—a modern-day version of the technique once favored by Napoleon III's wife, Eugénie—you begin by relaxing under a soothing stream of warm water. Once you're prepped, a practitioner uses fragrant essential oils and sweeping hand strokes to further ease your tension.

The water heats your skin, causing the scented oils to "bloom" and allowing for a deeper massage without discomfort (available at Ritz-Carlton Spa in New Orleans).

Ayurvedic theories inspired the **FOUR-HAND MASSAGE**: Two practitioners simultaneously massage your left and right sides—making sure to mimic each other's motions and to exert equal pressure—for a totally balanced experience (offered at the Raj Resort in Fairfield, Iowa, and Body Essentials Day Spa & Ayurvedic Center in New York City).

A series of rhythmic pressing, wringing, and eventually drumming motions distinguishes a **JAMU MASSAGE**, which starts slowly and builds to a quick staccato pace. "The gradual increase in pressure

gives your muscles a chance to adapt to the practitioner's touch," says massage therapist Kim Collier, who developed this Balinese-inspired treatment after living in Indonesia for ten years (offered at the Away Spa & Gym in the W Hotel in New York City and Cap Juluca Resort & Spa in Anguilla, British West Indies).

SOUND MASSAGE uses musical vibrations in place of human touch to help you achieve inner and outer harmony. A variety of instruments—from harps to gongs to Tibetan singing bowls, depending on what's prescribed to alleviate your physiological or emotional stress—are played while you lie on a "bed" of speakers that amplifies the live music (at the Rogner-Bad Blumau Spa in Blumau, Austria). —*Andrea Dawn Clark*