



# the Mac

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**ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE**  
Tommy Thompson of  
Alexander Technique  
International in Cambridge,  
Massachusetts, guides  
editorial assistant Patricia  
Lang in experiencing freer  
upper-body movement.

Your body speaks in many languages. An incredible array of sensations – pain, pleasure, itching, tingling, hot, cold, congestion, release – let you know how your body feels and what it needs. Bodyworkers are trained to interpret some of its many messages. Taking in your whole self, they watch you move, take your pulse, feel the density of your muscles or observe the way you breathe. From that close, quiet attention, they seek out the stuck places and work to move them.

Unlike physicians, who are trained to fight disease and fix broken body parts, bodyworkers are experts in engaging your body's capacity to correct itself. Bodywork thus extends what modern medicine provides. It can prepare you for surgery or help you recover more quickly. It can relieve or eliminate a physical problem not solved by drugs or surgery. And when a condition can't be changed, bodywork can help you change your response to it.

In this proliferating field, numerous types of bodywork abound. Some are based on contemporary insights, others on methods thousands of years old. They can lower stress, induce relaxation, release bodily constrictions and encourage free circulation and efficient movement. They can energize you and help you understand your body's own sensory dialect.

If you decide to try bodywork, keep in mind that your comfort with the practitioner is primary. In choosing a bodyworker, trust your referral source and your gut. There is often a surprising alchemy when your body's capacity to heal is

The right bodywork...  
therapy can relax  
and recharge your  
body, relieving  
tensions and freeing  
you to move more  
naturally.

# ic of Touch

BY JOAN ARNOLD

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HORNICK/RIVLIN

# Bodywork and Beyond

Where does massage end and bodywork begin? Can a practitioner heal without touch? How does bodywork address psychological issues? Here are five therapies that offer some answers and stretch the boundaries of the discipline.

**AMMA THERAPY:** Based on the principles of traditional Chinese medicine, this therapy refreshes and energizes through massage and counseling on diet, exercise, herbs, stress, emotions and spirituality. For information, contact the New York College for Wholistic Health Education & Research, (800) 922-7337.

**BREATHING COORDINATION:** Developed by former choral conductor Carl Stough, this method helps clients breathe more fully, automatically and easily. For information, contact the Carl Stough Institute, (212) 490-1934; [www.carlstough.org](http://www.carlstough.org).

**RUBENFELD SYNERGY:** Practitioners use a light touch to release physical tensions while verbally encouraging clients to explore the emotional and psychological roots of these tensions. For information, contact the National Association of Rubenfeld Synergists, (800) 484-3250, ext. 8516.

**THERAPEUTIC TOUCH:** Either with direct touch or hands hovering a few inches from the skin, practitioners remove energy blockages within clients' bodies and rebalance energy. For information, contact Nurse Healers-Professional Associates, (703) 234-4149; <http://www.therapeutic-touch.org>.

**ZERO BALANCING:** Practitioners use hands-on touch to balance the body's internal energy currents with such structural elements as bones, muscles, organs and joints. For information, contact the Zero Balancing Association, (831) 476-0665; <http://www.webcom.com/zba>. — J. A.

sparked by an informed, compassionate touch.

## ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

Each day we sit, stand and reach without thinking much about it. But innovator F. M. Alexander (1869-1955) discovered that unconscious habits of movement cause many of the posture and function limitations so many of us face, including back and neck problems, carpal tunnel syndrome and chronic pain.

Alexander was a Shakespearean orator who lost his voice while performing. When no medical treatment alleviated his problem, he spent nine years searching for the solution. He found that moving with an easy neck and lightly poised head encouraged his torso to expand, clearing the way for full vocalization. In working on others, he found that this solution could alleviate a range of other conditions. Now the Alexander Technique has a

place in many prestigious performing arts programs and health centers.

In an Alexander lesson, practitioners teach clients how to eliminate tensions that compress the spine and interfere with the body's inherent support system. They use words and a light touch to guide the clients toward a more natural coordination in their daily activities, helping them move with fluidity and grace and gain self-confidence and control over their bodies.

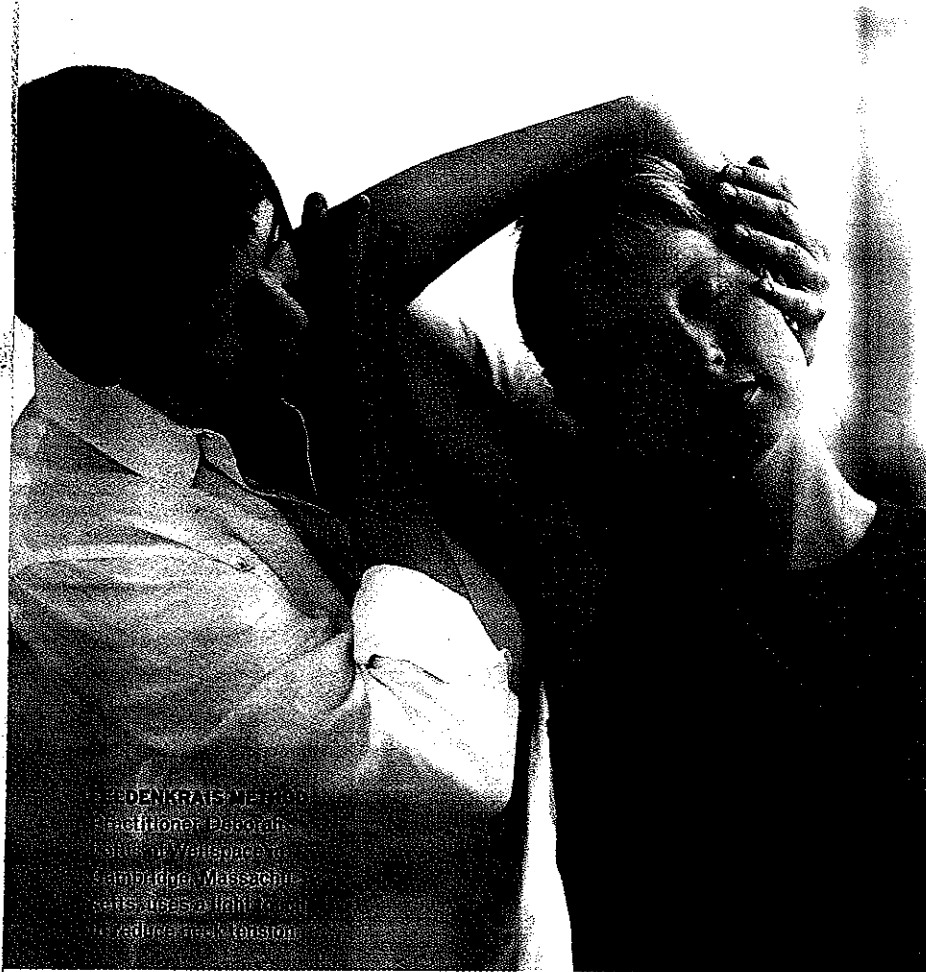
As an Alexander teacher, I have seen clients eliminate chronic back pain, improve their posture and return to activities they love, buoyed by a deeper understanding of how their bodies work best. Many have avoided surgery and eliminated the need for anti-inflammatory drugs or painkillers.

Arie DenBreeijen, for example, a 36-year-old finance officer in an entertainment firm, came to me because of sciatica that had plagued him for years. During his first lesson, he

## ZERO BALANCING

Jim McCormack of Cambridge Health Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, works to align the body's internal energy currents with its physical structure.





**ALEXANDER METHOD**  
Practitioner Deborah  
Latta of Wrentham, MA  
Cambridge, Massachu-  
setts uses a full hand  
to reduce neck tension.

sensed how releasing the muscles around his hip joint relieved his pain. After six lessons, he had eliminated the pain almost completely. Now, when he feels a twinge, he knows how to reduce the tension before it becomes a problem by using his new-found body awareness.

**What to expect:** Private lessons last 30–60 minutes and cost \$40–\$90. Clients are fully clothed. Studios contain a stool or chair, bodywork table and mirror. In one part of the lesson, clients lie on the table while the practitioner gently moves their limbs, encouraging tight muscles and joints to release. The practitioner also guides clients in efficient ways to perform various movements, such as typing at a computer or swinging a racquet.

**Conditions it helps:** Posture problems, neck and back pain, joint pain,

muscular tension, disk problems, arthritis, repetitive strain injuries, fibromyalgia, headaches, fatigue, panic attacks, asthma and other breathing problems.

**How to find a practitioner:** Contact the American Society for the Alexander Technique, (800) 473-0620; <http://www.alexandertech.org>.

#### BREEMA

One of the newest forms of bodywork to reach America is Breema. California chiropractor Jon Schreiber learned this hands-on method from Manocher Movlai, who studied it from childhood in his native village of Breemava, located in a rural Kurdish region between Iran and Afghanistan. The practice, hundreds of years old, is based on observations of natural daily movements such as the grinding of

wheat or gushing of a spring. A Breema session aims to release deep muscular tension and realign the body without force, using a repertoire of hands-on treatments and flowing movement sequences.

Practitioners stress the benefit of a nonjudgmental, harmonious atmosphere, envisioning the client as whole and healthy. "It's so safe that pregnant women and those with osteoporosis can receive Breema for increased circulation, joint mobilization and pain relief," says Schreiber. The work is gentle, calming and energizing; clients leave a session with increased flexibility and a deep sense of relaxation. They can also learn a varied set of movement sequences to practice for general health maintenance and enhanced awareness.

**What to expect:** Private sessions last 20–45 minutes and cost \$25–\$100. Clients lie, fully clothed, on the floor of a padded, carpeted studio. The practitioner moves them by gently stretching, twisting and leaning on body parts.

**Conditions it helps:** Neck and back pain, muscle spasms, sciatica, disk problems, joint pain, repetitive strain injuries, lowered immune function, high blood pressure, arthritis, headaches, fatigue, substance addictions, insomnia and respiratory, digestive or circulatory dysfunction.

**How to find a practitioner:** Contact the Breema Center, 6076 Claremont Avenue, Oakland CA 94618; (510) 923-0088; <http://www.breema.com>.

#### CRANIOSACRAL THERAPY

When Linda Wellmaker first watched craniosacral therapist Rebecca Hunt work on Wellmaker's 12-year-old son Jamie in West Palm Beach, Florida, she said to herself, "This is really weird." But after Jamie's years of difficulty con-

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## The Magic of Touch

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 65

centrating at school, she was willing to try anything to avoid putting him on ritalin to calm his hyperactivity and attention deficit disorder (ADD). He started the academic year with his customary restlessness, but after two sessions of craniosacral therapy, she says, "he began to get through class without as many problems." Weekly sessions throughout the school term helped calm his volatile behavior. "Now when he gets upset," she observes, "he doesn't explode anymore. His behavior reports changed, and his

der, stroke recovery, headaches, back pain, spinal cord injury, ADD, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, learning disabilities, whiplash, fatigue, depression, pelvic disorders and gastrointestinal problems.

**How to find a practitioner:** Contact the Upledger Institute, 11211 Prosperity Farms Road, D-325, Palm Beach Gardens FL 33410; (800) 233-5880, ext. 8279.

### FELDENKRAIS METHOD

"I don't try to change my clients," says Nancy Denenberg, a Feldenkrais practitioner and physical therapist in Ann Arbor, Michigan. "I try to support

## After six Feldenkrais Method sessions, her chronic pain was gone.

grades improved. By the end of the school year, he was on the honor roll."

Based on the cranial adjustments developed by osteopaths, craniosacral therapy works on the system of cerebrospinal fluid that bathes the brain and spinal cord. John Upledger, D.O., discovered in 1975 that restrictions in the rhythm of the craniosacral system's pulse can cause migraines, depression, cerebral palsy and other ailments. He trained thousands of practitioners to gently adjust the bones of the skull and bring the craniosacral system into balance, allowing the body to correct itself. Many chiropractors, physical therapists, physicians and acupuncturists incorporate this work into their practices.

**What to expect:** Private sessions last 40-60 minutes and cost \$40-\$200. Clients lie, clothed, on their backs on a massage table. Subtle adjustments made around the head, neck, shoulders and diaphragm can induce profound relaxation.

**Conditions it helps:** Eye and ear problems, temporomandibular joint disorder,

them where they are." This approach helped one client in her thirties who had a history of chronic back and pelvic pain. After a fall, she endured unremitting pain for two years and sought the help of a battery of alternative practitioners. Nothing worked.

In their first session, Denenberg learned that the woman had been born with club feet. Her family doctor had tried to correct the inward distortion at the ankle with casts that she wore as an infant. Denenberg began working with her by replicating the original twist of her feet. "When I did that, her whole system recalibrated, and she felt a release all the way up to her head," Denenberg says. She then guided her client toward gradually softening the ankle. As the woman stood up, she felt more of her foot's surface supporting her. "Before she left the office," recalls Denenberg, "she walked around my waiting room for twenty minutes, tasting the new sensation." After six sessions, her chronic pain was gone.

Russian-born Israeli Moshe Felden-

krais (1904-1984) was a physicist, engineer, judo master and soccer player. During the 1940s, a recurring knee injury prompted him to focus on the communication between body and brain. He went on to create an educational system that uses movement to clear a path to more effective function. In private sessions or group classes, practitioners help students recognize habitual movements and encourage them to explore other possibilities with a light touch. Practitioners guide students through a large repertoire of inventive movement sequences in a spirit of inquiry, not effort. The hallmark of Feldenkrais work is delicate exploration.

**What to expect:** Private "Functional Integration" sessions last 45-60 minutes and cost \$40-120. They include hands-on table work and a variety of movement exercises. "Awareness Through Movement" group classes cost \$10-15 per class. They include movement experiments for enhanced body awareness and function.

**Conditions it helps:** Polio, hypertension, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, recovery from trauma or stroke, restricted range of motion, and problems with digestion, sleep, alertness, flexibility, balance, coordination, stress and disability.

**How to find a practitioner:** Contact the Feldenkrais Guild, (800) 775-2118; <http://www.feldenkrais.com>.

### POLARITY THERAPY

"Energy has to make a loop," says Gary Peterson, executive director of the American Polarity Therapy Association, "whether it's house wiring, a relationship or the energy to go to work every day." Practitioners of Polarity Therapy say that health problems begin when the energy loop is interrupted. To promote clients' well-being, they use touch, diet, counsel-

ing and exercise to reestablish the energy field's balanced flow.

Innovator Randolph Stone (1890-1981) trained as an osteopath, naturopath and chiropractor in Chicago. He spent sixty years traveling around the world researching health systems such as India's Ayurveda and China's traditional medicine. Focusing on the body's electromagnetic field, he developed a therapy that aims to restore connections when the flow of energy within the body is short-circuited by trauma, self-defeating attitudes or an unhealthy lifestyle.

That approach worked for Barbara Swanson, whose Caribbean vacation was marred when a motorboat ran into her sailboat and the ocean's heavy swells jarred her spine. She returned to her Boulder, Colorado, home in pain. "I was in bed with severe headaches," says the 42-year-old mother of three, "unable to sit for more than five minutes at a time." But after five weekly polarity sessions with Peterson, her headaches and muscular pain were gone. "When I'm tense or in pain," Swanson says, "first I breathe. Then I can get relief by focusing on a body part that doesn't hurt. I'm under a lot of stress at this time in my life, but Polarity Therapy helps me cope with that. I'm more centered and more relaxed, and I have some tools to work on myself."

**What to expect:** Sessions last 60-90 minutes and cost \$40-\$60. An initial interview includes a discussion of symptoms, diet and stress. Clients wear loose, comfortable clothing and lie on a bodywork table. Practitioners use light touch, deep massage or rocking to release muscular contractions and promote energy flow. They also counsel clients on stress-reduction strategies, diet and exercise.

**Conditions it helps:** Pain, burnout, muscular tension, sprains, sports

injuries, trauma, nervous-system disorders, ADD, ADHD, fibromyalgia and multiple sclerosis. Can be used during labor or postpartum.

**How to find a practitioner:** Contact the American Polarity Therapy Association, 2888 Bluff Street, Suite 149, Boulder CO 80301; (303) 545-2080; <http://www.polaritytherapy.org>.

#### ROSEN METHOD

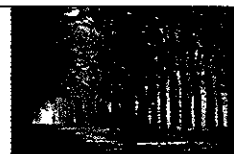
"The body doesn't lie," observes 85-year-old Marion Rosen. The form of bodywork this former physical therapist created helps clients release muscular tension, relieve pain and understand the emotional roots of their physical holding patterns.

The Rosen Method is based on the idea that people react to overwhelming experiences or emotions by unconsciously storing them in held breath or tight muscles. This mechanism helps us survive, but an aspect of the self stays frozen. A Rosen practitioner can create a sympathetic, safe environment in which clients can relax and fully experience censored emotions such as grief, anger and fear. When brought to light in this environment, darkened aspects of the self can become a rich resource.

Though the Rosen Method facilitates progress by reawakening the client's deepest emotions, it is not psychotherapy. Bill Samsel, president of the Rosen Institute, describes his role as "being there as a witness, not fixing the problem or solving it." Trained as a social worker and massage therapist, he practices in Santa Cruz, California. With his hands, Samsel senses contrasts in temperature or muscular rigidity. "We talk to the person as we work," he says, "not to engage the analytical mind, but to connect with the feeling that manifests through physical sensations, images or memories."

“... a personal treasure waiting to take place!”

—JUNE TANGNEY, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at George Mason University



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**What to expect:** Hourlong sessions cost \$40–\$90. Clients lie face down on a bodywork table, partially clothed and covered by a sheet. Practitioners use a soft touch and words to guide clients in muscular release and emotional awareness.

**Conditions it can help:** Chronic tension and pain, depression, anxiety, asthma, malaise, and recovery from accident, abuse, crisis or trauma. Helpful with substance abuse when combined with psychotherapy.

**How to find a practitioner:** Contact the Rosen Method Professional Association, (800) 893-2622; <http://www.rosenmethod.org>

#### TRAGER METHOD

Trager practitioner Martha Partridge works with Parkinson's patients in large New York City hospitals, complementing medical care with move-

ment reeducation. Neurologists at Mt. Sinai, St. Luke's and Beth Israel refer patients to her, and she keeps the doctors informed on her activities and her patients' progress. "Parkinson's is a movement disorder," she says. "When you move or are moved through bodywork, more neurotransmission takes place."

The Trager Method was developed by Milton Trager, a former boxer, dancer and acrobat who discovered that his touch could relieve pain. The method uses motion in muscles and joints to reinforce the feedback loop between body and mind, triggering changes in tight tissue and helping clients shift unhelpful patterns in the unconscious.

Trager practitioners, who are expert movers from backgrounds in dance, yoga or athletics, guide clients through varied rhythms that jiggle, soothe, rock, swing and elongate the body.

Another aspect of Trager work is Mentastics, effortless dancelike movements that clients do on their own to recall and reinforce the sensations they experience in their sessions.

**What to expect:** Sessions last 1½ hours and cost \$50–\$115. Clients may lie on a bodywork table and be gently moved or join the practitioner in moving through space. There is no set protocol. Though the approach is clear in its principles, sessions are improvised and tailored to the client.

**Conditions it helps:** Chronic pain, depression, poor posture, limited movement range, paralysis, fibromyalgia, spasms and severe neuromuscular disturbances such as multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy and Parkinson's.

**How to find a practitioner:** Contact the Trager Institute, 21 Locust Avenue, Mill Valley CA 94941; (415) 388-2688; <http://www.trager.com>

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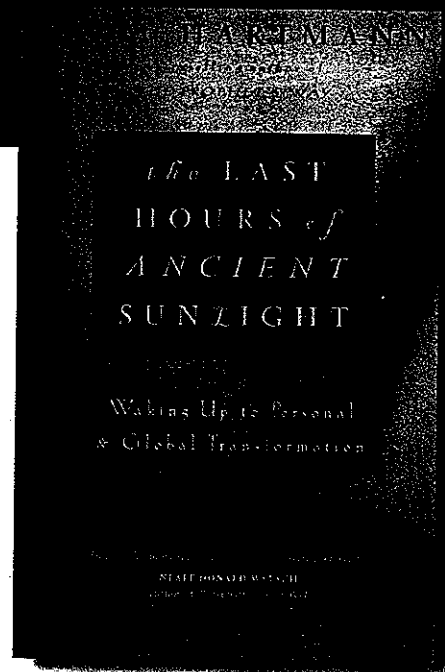
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—Jean Houston, author of *A Mythic Life*

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