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Get the Knead You Need!

5 tips to getting a great holiday massage to ease stress.

Talk about the pressing issue

Too little pressure will feel like you are wasting your time and too much pressure can actually increase your muscle tension and leave you feeling sore. Holding your breath and tightening other muscles are examples that the pressure is too intense. "I could take more pressure there" or "I need a little less pressure there" are simple ways to tell your therapist how you are doing.

Discuss "hands off" before getting "hands-on"

Nothing is worse than having key muscles not massaged at the end of the session. State a priority of areas to be addressed to assure your session is focused only on the areas you want. For example, "I'm okay if you don't get to my hands and feet and arms, as long as you can do a thorough job on my low back neck and shoulders." Another tip is to ask the therapist to let you know when ten minutes are remaining in your session. Then you can direct them to any areas that may have been missed.

Pay attention to your tension

If your position on the table is creating tension anywhere in your body, tell your therapist so they can make adjustments. People commonly feel more relaxed lying face down when a pillow is placed under their abdomen. For example, "I am noticing my lower back is becoming more tense lying here, can you place a pillow under my abdomen?"

Get the bare essentials about draping

Therapists and clients have different levels of comfort regarding the amount of clothing worn during a session. Some therapists are completely comfortable with you being naked under the drape sheet, some wish you to keep on undergarments, while some clients may want to be in gym shorts and t-shirt. Know yourself. Only undress to your level of comfort, or you will experience excessive tension on the table. Local laws may dictate levels of undress while undergoing massage therapy.

Silence is not golden

Remember this is your time on your dime and even the best massage therapists cannot read your mind. Everyone wins when your massage meets or exceeds your expectations. You get the massage you paid for and the therapist gains by getting increased referrals. Following these guidelines will help you get the most out of your massage so your back won't get bent of shape!

John Gifford is the owner of Motionwise® in Berkley Michigan, and is one of the most experienced bodywork practitioners in the country with over 30,000 sessions of experience. He is the author of the newly released book, **Essential Stretches You'll Actually Use**. For more information go to motionwise.com.