

Becoming a Massage Therapist

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The field of massage therapy is growing, and for good reason. Massage therapy is interesting, sociable, and well paid. People who are looking for a career that combines personal interaction with the opportunity to promote health should consider massage therapy. These professionals practice the art and science of relieving pain, reducing stress, and healing injuries. If you examine how massage therapists work, it can help you determine if this is the right career for you. This paper will explain the art and science of massage and show how to become a member of this specialty - one of the fastest growing professions in America.

Massage therapy has a wide range of applications. Massage therapists help their clients in the areas of, stress, pain, injury, and relaxation. The clients of a massage therapist can include injury victims, performers, old people, athletes, and even white-collar professionals. Massage therapists do their work in many settings, such as therapeutic clinics, doctors' offices, fitness centers, spas, nursing homes, hospitals, and sports teams. Some massage therapists have their own portable equipment and perform their work at the office or home of their client (Taylor).

The demand for massage therapists has become very high in recent years, owing to a significant public trend in the use of massage as a health care option. Earnings vary widely depending on the type of practice and location, as well as on the skill and experience of the therapist. Practitioners with their own facility usually earn the most but they also carry the burden of having to build and maintain a steady and reliable clientele base. Those working for an hourly wage tend to earn less, but they do not have over-head expenses (Capellini 65).

The fundamentals of massage therapy include Swedish massage, deep tissue massage, and trigger point therapy. Some of the more common forms of massage therapy in practical application include the following. There is relaxation massage: this is typically performed in a spa setting. This type of therapy includes stress management and relaxation treatments. There is sports massage: This form of therapy is practiced in many settings, and involves working with athletes to enhance their performance as well as helping them to recover from injuries. There is medical/clinical massage: This type of massage treats people who suffer from pain and injuries, and is usually practiced in a doctor's office, chiropractor's office, hospital, or medical clinic. Finally, there is corporate onsite massage. This is offered to employees of several major corporations. This type of therapy can run from a 15-minute seated to a full-table massage and typically involves travel for the therapist to an onsite location (Capellini 88).

To become a massage therapist, consider the following steps. First, become familiar with the profession. Visit massage therapists and receive some massages personally. Look online for information about different types of massage or check the local library for massage books. Contact local therapists or schools and ask questions. Research the particular licensing requirements of your city and state, because licensing requirements vary from state to state and city to city. Currently 33 states and the District of Columbia regulate massage therapy in some fashion. In states without statewide regulation of massage, municipalities tend to have requirements for a business license (Capellini 213).

Secondly, it is important to become familiar with the regulatory requirements in cities and states where a prospective therapist may wish to practice. Presently, most states require a minimum of 500 or more hours of massage training (Taylor).

Next, find and complete a suitable training program. Look for a program that leads to certification and, most importantly, one which satisfies licensing requirements. Massage schools generally require a high school diploma and a personal interview. Oftentimes massage schools will arrange internships with a local massage practice, so that the student can gain a valuable amount of practical on-the-job experience. Depending on the specific program of study, the school will award either a certification in a certain specialty or a degree (Capellini 148). Be sure to enroll in a training program that is accredited. One such agency is the Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation (COMTA). At the present time, there are approximately 70 training programs and institutions accredited by COMTA.

Finally, the student must become certified. The National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB) administers an exam-based national certification program. Those who pass become eligible to use the title "Nationally Certified in Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork" and may use the initials NCTMB. Most states that regulate massage therapists have adopted this exam as a state exam. Graduating students generally take the national certification exam shortly after completing school (Capellini).

The profession of massage therapy is changing – and in all the best ways. In the past, almost all massage therapists worked for themselves. Today, however, there are a growing number of jobs working for massage therapy companies. In order to find employment as a massage therapist one should look for massage schools, local papers, online employment sites, medical clinics, health clubs, spas, and corporations. People who want to start their own business can find many resources for new business owners through the Small Business Administration (“Massage Therapy”).

These are the basics involved in becoming a successful massage therapist. But there's much more to learn. The profession requires an aptitude for working with people, and it can lead to a very satisfying and rewarding career. An early familiarity with the profession, knowledge of the education/licensing requirements, and the right training are the key elements of success. If a person continually improves his or her education, practice, and credential building, that person will not only maintain that success but will enhance it.

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