

MASSAGE FACTS

Massage once seen as shady practice

Believe it or not, massage wasn't always as highly regarded as it is today.

Massage used to be a common front for prostitution and was generally regarded as a shady practice, says Byron Hanks, massage instructor at Lane Community College.

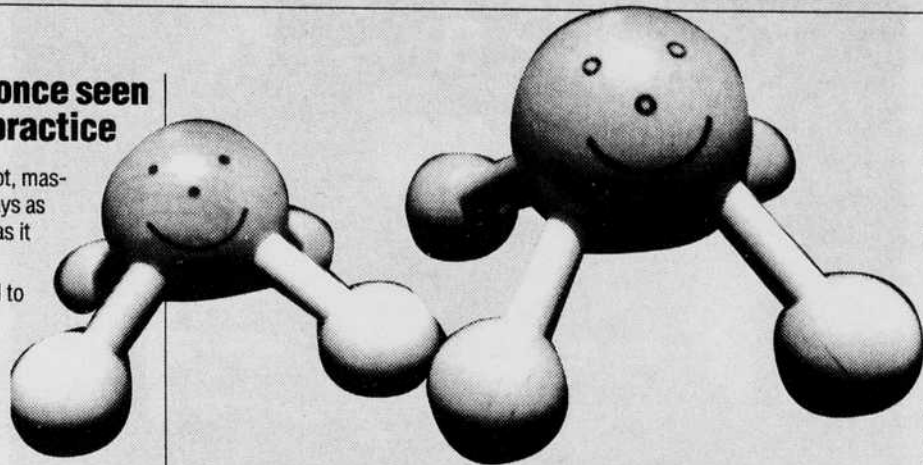
However, World Wars I and II sparked a conversion of public opinion toward the activity as veterans required increasing treatment for their war wounds.

"Doctors were shorthanded, nurses had their hands full, and the growth of occupational and physical therapy really blossomed," he says. "People started seeing the value of body working — that was the boost."

The change in public opinion was not instantaneous, however. In fact, much of the change has occurred during the past 10 years, Hanks says.

"People realize massage has its own health value. Now there's a clear split between the shady aspects and the health factors."

— By Nicole Krueger



Happy Massager created by therapist to reduce strain of massage on hands

Jennifer Thompson, a senior majoring in journalism, used to have a Happy Massager.

"I was living in Carson, and my Happy Massager became famous," she says. "Everybody wanted to come over and borrow it."

Thompson said the tool was useful because it kept her hands from getting tired when she gave back rubs. "My hands would always end up hurting, but with the Happy Massager you could do it forever."

The Happy Massager, a wooden massage tool (pictured above), is a product of the company Tender Loving Things Inc. It was created by California native Mark Juarez, an inventor and certified massage therapist.

Juarez was practicing and teaching massage in Europe when he began to notice that many of his colleagues were developing carpal tunnel syndrome, according to a

press release. He developed the Happy Massager to help reduce the strain of massage on the hands without reducing its effectiveness.

After patenting his product, Juarez raised \$20,000 and returned to the United States in 1992 to found Tender Loving Things Inc.

Revenues jumped from \$35,000 in 1992 to \$19.5 million in 1995, and the company grew to include 303 employees. Today, more than seven million Happy Massagers have been sold worldwide.

Thompson no longer has her massager, which she gave to a friend who needed it one day. But she said she would like to own one again.

"I think it relieves a lot of stress just because it's kind of a funny little object," she says. "It kind of makes you laugh."

"It makes you happy."

— By Nicole Krueger

In addition to relieving stress, massage has many health benefits

Everyone knows a good back rub both relaxes and relieves stress. But some of the other beneficial effects of massage are much less known.

IMPROVES BLOOD CIRCULATION: By dilating blood vessels, massage increases the flow of blood and relieves congestion throughout the body.

INCREASES NUTRITION TO MUSCLES: Toxic lactic acid, which is produced during voluntary muscle contractions, is not produced when the muscle is stimulated by massage.

IMPROVES MUSCLE TONE: Massage also helps prevent muscular atrophy, which results from forced inactivity.

STRETCHES CONNECTIVE TISSUE: Massage breaks down or prevents the formation of adhesions and reduces the danger of fibrosis.

CAN PARTIALLY COMPENSATE FOR LACK OF EXERCISE: Massage helps return venous blood to the heart, easing the strain on it.

SOURCE: Southampton University Massage Club Web site



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