

Massage NOW, MORE THAN EVER

By Nora Brunner

With the wild fluctuations in the stock market, financial sages keep giving the same advice: “Invest for the long term. Don’t be alarmed by short-term losses.” It’s a good reminder that the best investments usually are ones that require foresight and patience. It’s hard to keep in mind with all the scary headlines, but it’s an enduring truth.

You know the saying: “When you have your health, you have just about everything.” Never is investing for the long term more important than when you are making day-to-day decisions about your health. Every choice you make that favors your health and good habits today translates into better health tomorrow. There are short-term gains from taking care of your health to be sure, but the long-term benefits are not to be underestimated.

You already know the value of a great massage because you’ve already tried it. You may partake of it regularly, and if you do, good for you (literally!). But for all the short-term stress and pain relief and the relaxation and clear-headedness you experience now, there are lasting rewards you’ll thank yourself for down the road. Massage therapy as a preventive measure and as ongoing care can mean fewer visits to the doctor, as well as fewer co-pays, prescriptions, and over-the-counter medications.

AN EXCELLENT VALUE

As you plan the family budget, ponder how massage therapy impacts your ability to make good decisions, cope with extra responsibilities, maintain harmonious relationships with coworkers, family, and

friends, and stay on an even keel emotionally and spiritually.

Research supports the value of massage. It has been shown to:

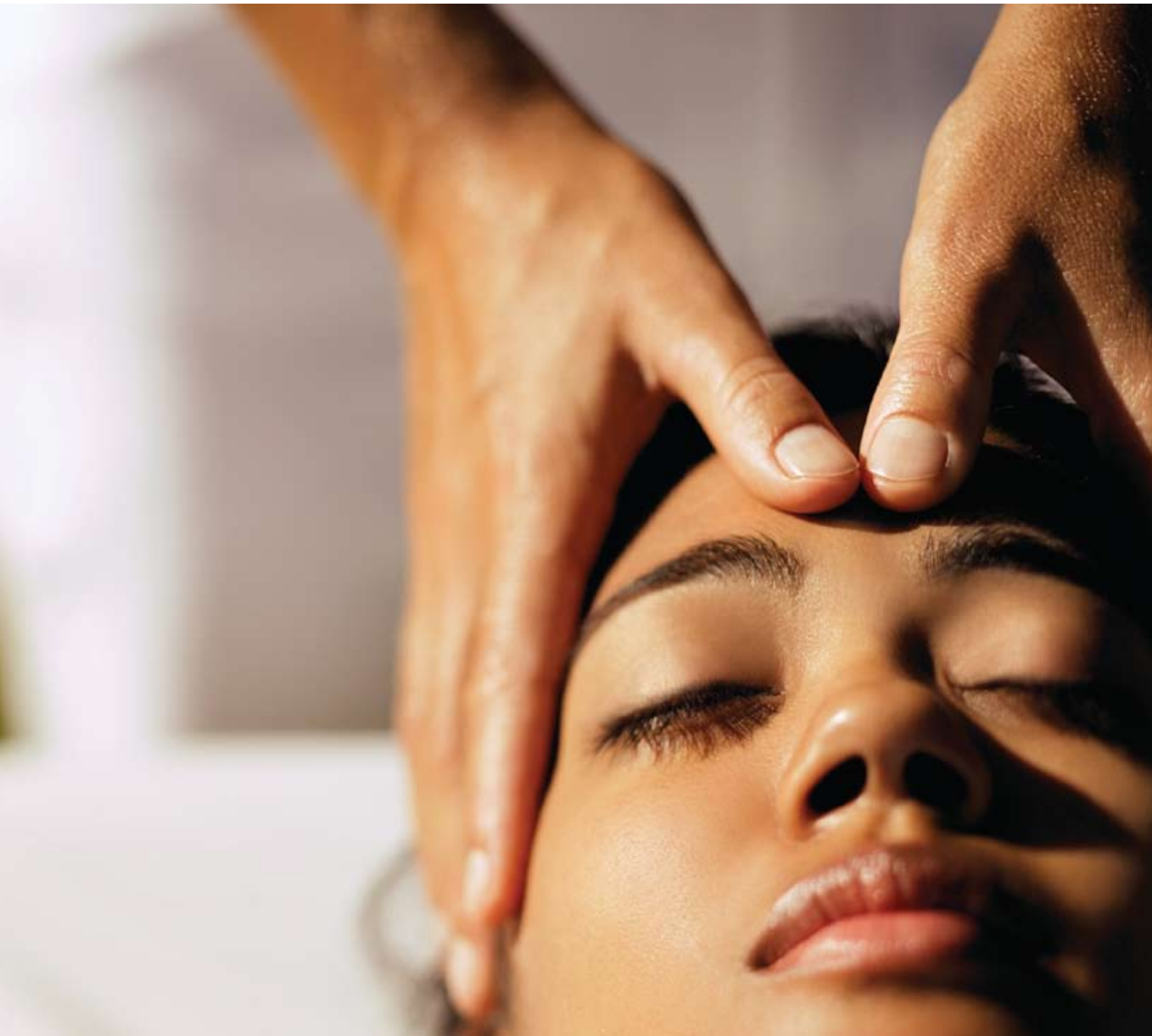
- Boost the immune system.
- Improve circulation, concentration, energy, self-esteem, and sleep.
- Reduce anxiety, fatigue, the flow of stress hormones, and the frequency of headaches.
- Release endorphins.

You may be trimming some extras out of your budget, as many Americans are. When weighing what goes and what stays, consider what an excellent value massage is, especially in relation to things that may be less valuable, but still cost you plenty. The price of massage has remained stable in recent years, while the cost of movies, dining out, and sports events have risen. Which of these activities has the power to improve your health?

GET CREATIVE

There are many ways to keep massage in your life if you use your imagination. While vacations are definitely needed right now by just about everybody, many experts say one big vacation a year is less helpful to mental and physical health than shorter breaks at regular intervals. How about taking less expensive mini-vacations that include massage? More and more Americans are staying home, or staying at least closer to home, and are taking in local attractions during their time off—“staycations.” How about planning a healthy, home-based vacation and including massage as part of your relaxation?

When it comes to gift-giving occasions, why not give and ask for massage gift certificates? Massage makes a wonderful replacement for flowers that wilt, sweaters that don’t fit, or another box of fattening candy. Some folks buy spa packages or put together their own outings with a massage, a museum excursion, or lunch at a favorite restaurant. Couples are getting massage together for romantic occasions. Mothers, daughters, aunts, and grandmothers are



enjoying spas together and massage is a key part of the package. These events create bonding experiences that launch new traditions, and while they cost some money, they pay off in fun, memories, and relaxation benefits.


Gift certificates for chair massage at airports are an option for weary travelers, as is chair massage at malls for package-laden shoppers. If you are an employer, consider gifting your staff with on-site chair massage, which has been shown to reduce stress and improve performance. Just think of it as the ultimate pat on the back for staff and one that pays you back.

MAINTAINING WELL-BEING

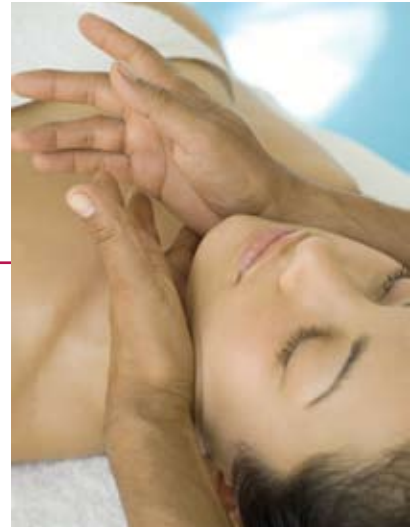
You may be tempted to trim your wellness budget when economic times are tough. Yet, a recent national consumer survey showed most massage-minded Americans are still committed to maintaining the health benefits they experience with massage. It only makes sense. The better you feel, the better job you can do of caring for yourself and your loved ones. Massage therapy will also help families under stress create healthier households and more focused and

relaxed moms and dads. Children are sensitive and often pick up on tension in a household; parents who are taking care of themselves are more likely to provide a sense of calm to their kids. This goes for caregivers of aging parents, too.

Now, more than ever, massage should play a role in reducing your stress and strengthening your health. When people feel their best, they are more able to face the challenges difficult times present. With greater health and peace of mind, you can face difficulties with poise, clarity of purpose, and strengthened emotional reserves.

Truly, massage is more than a luxury—it's a vital part of self-care that has a positive ripple effect on you as you work, play, and care for others. Investing in your health is one thing that's sure to pay off in an uncertain world. 

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Massage as Medicine

Massage provides many benefits, including improved concentration, energy, and self-esteem, as well as reduced stress. It's helpful with more acute health conditions, also. If you or a loved one are already dealing with a health condition, massage is an even more important part of your healthcare planning. Research shows:

- Alzheimer's patients exhibit reduced irritability, pacing, and restlessness after neck and shoulder massage.
- Deep-tissue massage is effective in treating arthritis, back pain, fibromyalgia, and osteoarthritis. Fibromyalgia patients receiving massage have fewer sleep problems and less anxiety, depression, fatigue, pain, and stiffness.
- Massage during labor appears to help block pain, reduce stress and anxiety, and relax muscles. Some medical professionals say massage shortens labor and hospital stays.
- Massage can reduce sports-related soreness and improve circulation.
- Massage is beneficial in reducing symptoms associated with arthritis, asthma, burns, high blood pressure, and premenstrual syndrome.
- Massage therapy is effective in reducing post-surgical pain and reducing recovery times.
- Oncology patients show less anxiety, depression, fatigue, nausea, and pain following massage therapy.
- Preterm babies receiving massage therapy gain more weight and have shorter hospital stays.