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Knowledge, Skills & Support for Massage Therapists

The Muscular Imprint of Tension

Most of us have “favorite” places we store tension. For example, it might be the neck, low back, jaw or the abdomen. This muscle tension often settles in our “favorite” area due to an old injury, poor posture or awkward body positioning at work or play. However, each person’s pattern of muscle tension is also shaped by how they think of the challenges in their life. This is because the nervous system is wired to respond instantly to certain thoughts and feelings with the appropriate physical posture.

Green Light Reflex: Preparation for ACTION

If we feel that we can rise to a challenge and surmount it, the muscles that hold us erect become activated and we stand taller and ready for action. The blood is directed to our brain and adaptive. However, if we feel that every challenge requires such strong activation, then we can lock this pattern tension into our body. Consequently we may have “good” (erect) posture, but our body might be stiff and compressed. This compression causes fatigue and may set the stage for muscle and spinal pain, as well as nerve compression syndromes.

Red Light Reflex: PROTECTION & GUARDING

If a situation is felt to be overwhelming or more challenging than we know how to deal with, we assume a protective posture that tenses the muscles at the front of the body. In this “red neck and head. The abdominal muscles clench to curl up and protect our delicate midsection. Y jgp"vjku"tg lgz"ku"cevxcvfg"tgrgcvgfn{ "qxtg"o qp vju."{ gctu"qt"fgecfgu"qwt"ujqwnfgtu"cuuw o g" an almost permanent posture of elevation. This causes neck pain and headaches. The forward head posture may give rise to chronic neck and jaw tension, pain and headaches. Blood is constipation, bloating or other abdominal problems.

Your next appointment is _____ at _____

The Muscular Imprint of Tension, cont'd

Freeze Reflex: The Art of Becoming INVISIBLE

If a situation is terrifying us. Along with the freezing of movement, the mind “leaves the body” or dissociates; we become the wild, the animal will spontaneously shake and shudder the tension out of their body after the our breath and have locked muscles and impaired body awareness. This can lead to a lot of pain, as well as poor body use choices that create even more tension!

Most of us have a bit of one or more of these reflex responses locked into our bodies. What can the thought pattern go. For example, do we really need to hold the toothbrush with a death-grip? Do we need to think of each work deadline as a life-threatening event? This re-framing of our response to stress needs to be both a mental emotional shift as well as a change in how we physically react to stress.

Massage therapy can be a wonderful way to relax these chronically activated stress responses. As muscle tension is released it is often easier to let go of the stress response patterns. Massage therapists are also trained to teach methods that will allow you to release tension in your body between massage appointments, as well as when to refer you to other health care professionals for further assistance.

Self Analysis Chart

What areas of my body are vulnerable to stress/tension?

Do I have an old injury and/or chronic stress response in this area?

Are there any thoughts and/or feelings associated with this problem area?

How can I ask my massage therapist for help with this?

Do I need any other help with this?