
The TILE System

The TILE system is the most comprehensive tool available for the massage therapist to accurately determine what can and cannot be performed with the client based upon their condition. The four columns signify the four massage technique classifications: TOLERANCE, INCREMENTAL, LIGHT, and ENERGY. Each is explained in greater detail below. The height of the blocks in each column signifies the relative intensity of the technique, with TOLERANCE techniques having the greatest pressure intensity, and ENERGY techniques having the least intensity. Over 130 massage techniques have been researched and categorized based upon the technique's goals and pressure intensity.



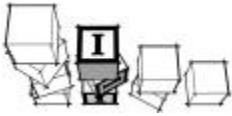
Tolerance Massage Techniques

This group consists of massage techniques that routinely use an intense pressure. This pressure is typically beyond the client's "comfort zone" (assuming their senses are not dulled by medications or disease). These techniques have the greatest effect on the circulatory system and may include a local inflammatory reaction to the pressure.

TOLERANCE techniques typically are goal-oriented, striving for greater function or mobility. They typically instigate an active healing response by the body. For example, if the therapist determines that adhesions have formed between a tendon and adjacent tissues, s/he may consider using a deep friction massage across the tendon to break up the adhesions. This forces the body to clean up the remnants and patch up torn tissue. The end result is an improvement in flexibility and function, but it relies heavily upon a properly functioning body to finish the repairs.

Because TOLERANCE techniques are the most taxing to the body and may also be emotionally strenuous, this class of techniques are the first to be eliminated whenever the client's healing strength or resilience is in question.

Massage techniques in the TOLERANCE category include: Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapy, Canadian Deep Muscle Massage, Cross-Fiber Massage, Deep Tissue Massage, Endermologie, Hellerwork, Korean Martial Therapy, Lypposage, Myofascial Release, Myoskeletal Alignment Technique, Pfrimmer Deep Muscle Therapy, Postural Integration, Rebalancing, Rolfing, Soft Tissue Release, Soma Neuromuscular Integration, and Structural Integration.



Incremental Massage Techniques

There is a wide range of different techniques in the INCREMENTAL group. They typically begin with a relatively light pressure and become more intense as the session progresses. The therapist strives to stay within the client's "comfort zone" with these techniques. This is the common theme linking these techniques together in the INCREMENTAL group. All stretching techniques fall under this classification.

INCREMENTAL techniques also actively stimulate an improvement in the lymph and circulatory systems. The benefits of this stimulation are well established. However, for the same reason that they are powerful stimulators of the healing response, they can have a dramatic effect if the body is unable to handle these effects.

The INCREMENTAL massage techniques may be prohibited for a number of reasons. The body may be overwhelmed by the dramatic circulatory changes that these techniques can create, as explained above. The client may be under the influence of medication that prevents the body from properly reacting to this level of stimulation, such as anti-inflammatory or heart medications. In some instances, the client's immune system may be too fragile from a current or recent condition to handle INCREMENTAL techniques. You may interpret the effects of your techniques differently than this guide; be sure to fully research the client's condition and how it reacts to massage, as well as the medications taken for this condition before disregarding this precaution. Many of the techniques listed here may be considered TOLERANCE techniques if the pressure intensity is high, or LIGHT techniques if the pressure intensity is low. The more knowledgeable you are about your techniques and their effects, as well as your client's conditions, the safer and more effective you will be.

Massage techniques in the INCREMENTAL category include: Acupressure, AcroSage (Inversion Therapy), Amma, Applied Kinesiology, Aston-Patterning, Ayurvedic Massage, Balinese Massage, Berrywork, Bindegewebmassage, Bioenergetics, Biosync, Body Rolling, Bowen Technique, Chair Massage, Champissage, Chi Nei Tsang, Connective Tissue Massage, Conscious Bodywork, Foot Zone Therapy, Gua Sha, Hakomi, HEMME, Hoshino Therapy, Hot Stone Massage, Jamu Massage, Jin Shin Do, Kripalu Bodywork, Kriya Massage, Lastone Therapy, Lomilomi, Lonsdale Method, Looyen Work, Massotherapy, Medical Massage, Movement Therapy, Muscle Energy Technique, Muscle Release Technique, Myomassology, Myotherapy, Naprapathy, Neuro-Structural Bodywork, Neuromuscular Therapy, Nikkon (Okazaki) Restorative Massage, Nuad Bo Rarn, Nuat Thai, Onsen Technique, Orthopedic Massage, Oshiatsu, Prenatal/Pregnancy Massage,

Reflective Healing, Reflexognosy, Reflexology, Reichian Release, Reposturing Dynamics, Restoration Therapy, Russian Massage, Shiatsu, Spinal Release, Sports Massage, St. John's Neuromuscular Therapy, Strain/Counterstrain, Swedish Massage, Taikyo Shiatsu, Tantsu Tantric Shiatsu, Thai Massage, Touch For Health, Trigger Point Myotherapy, Tui Na, Vibrational Healing Massage Therapy, Visceral Manipulation, Watsu, Yogasage, Zen Shiatsu, and Zero Balancing.



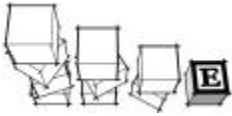
Light Massage Techniques

LIGHT massage techniques all include touching the client's body with some application of pressure. My personal definition of light pressure is significantly different than other therapists; indeed, sometimes their "light" techniques go way beyond my comfort zone! After considerable research into the effects of light pressure massage and the techniques listed below, I have come to the conclusion that any discussion of light pressure should include the effects on the body as well as the client's perception. With the vast array of medications available to the client to boost their emotional and physical pain threshold, it falls upon the therapist to determine how much is too much. Obviously, if it is painful to the client, then it falls outside the realm of LIGHT pressure.

This class of technique includes goals for mental relaxation and relief. Physical goals include increasing circulation and reducing tension through nervous system relaxation rather than more intense physical pressure. LIGHT techniques are less likely to be considered "muscle massage" techniques, even though certain mobility techniques would fall into this category. Any stretching is limited to fingertip pressure.

The upper limit of light pressure can be demonstrated as follows: Place your hand palm down on a hard surface. Slowly begin applying pressure with the pad of your middle finger, stopping when you see a whitening of the nail bed by the distal (outer) edge. That pressure or less can be considered light massage pressure.

Massage techniques in the LIGHT category include: Alexander Technique, Bindi, Body-Mind Centering, Breema Bodywork, Esalen Massage, Feldenkrais, Huna Kane, Ingham Method, Insight Bodywork, Integrative Massage, Lymph Drainage Therapy, M Technique, Manual Lymph Drainage, Ortho-Bionomy, Rubenfeld Synergy Method, Trager Approach, Trauma Erase, and UNTIE.



Energy Massage Techniques

These techniques may or may not have the therapist make physical contact with the client. Any touch is without pressure and incidental to the technique. This is the only classification in which there is no direct, localized increase in circulation. As a result, almost all conditions can benefit from these techniques. There are notable exceptions listed in the guide, however, so it is still recommended that the therapist reference each condition and not assume that the client is always safe with these techniques. The goals are focused on improving the client's energy, vitality and sense of well-being.

Massage techniques in the ENERGY category include: Attunement Therapy, Barbara Brennan Healing Science, Bioenergy, Biofeedback, Bio-Magnetic Touch Healing, Bodytalk, Christopher Method, Craniosacral Therapy, Earth Energy Healing, EMF Balancing Technique, Energy Flow Balancing, Haelan technique, Healing Touch, Holographic Memory Release, Jin Shin Jyutsu, Kundalini Energization, Lenair Technique, Mariel Technique, Polarity Therapy, Pranic Healing, Qigong, Quantum Energetics, Quantum-Touch, Reiki, Ro-Hun Transformation Therapy, Rosen Method Bodywork, Shen Therapy, Shinkiko, Syntropy Insight Bodywork, Therapeutic Touch, Tibetan Point Holding, Trauma Touch Therapy, Tuina Chinese Medical Massage, Turaya Touch System, and Vortex Healing Energetic Therapy.

Individual Interpretation

It must be understood that there is considerable variance within each massage technique. Each therapist also adds a unique quality to his or her techniques. For instance, one therapist's application of Myomassology techniques (listed in the INCREMENTAL class) may be up to the limit of the client's tolerance, in which case it might be more appropriate for that therapist to classify their "normal" massage higher than what is listed in this guide. Likewise, it is entirely possible to perform reflexology techniques (also listed in the INCREMENTAL class) using no pressure whatsoever, thereby enabling this technique to be acceptable for those conditions in which ENERGY techniques are recommended. This guide draws upon the unique skills and knowledge of the therapist to accurately determine the correct classification for their techniques.

Each client will present with a unique set of conditions. It is especially important to note the precautions for every condition the client presents with. For example, the client may have osteoporosis, requiring one set of precautions, and diabetes, which has another set. All precautions should be adhered to.

In this increasingly litigious society it is critical that the therapist has an accurate method of documenting the pressure and scope of each massage session. Applying the TILE method to daily sessions and notes will give the therapist the secure knowledge that s/he is providing the most accurate and appropriate precautions known for client safety.

Icons Used in This Book

Here are all the TILE icons as they will appear with each condition. When you see the caution symbol replacing the letter, it signifies that this class of technique is prohibited. Remember, TILE is an acronym for the four technique classes, and the icons represent the relative intensity from the most intense (TOLERANCE) to the least (ENERGY).



This TILE icon is completely full, which indicates that your full range of massage techniques are encouraged without restriction.



This icon has the TOLERANCE class removed and replaced with a caution symbol. When you see this icon it indicates that the INCREMENTAL, LIGHT and ENERGY techniques are encouraged, but TOLERANCE techniques should be avoided.



This icon has both the TOLERANCE and INCREMENTAL class of techniques removed and replaced with caution symbols. LIGHT and ENERGY techniques are encouraged.



When you see this icon, no circulatory massage should be performed. All pressure techniques should be avoided. ENERGY techniques are encouraged.



There are certain situations or conditions that are life threatening, and any intervention by a therapist may prove disastrous. If you see this icon, avoid all techniques until the client has stabilized and their physician has given approval.

Disc Herniation Precautions



Restrict massage to Light and Energy techniques over the affected spinal area. Your full technique range is encouraged for the rest of the body.



Low back pain or pain in the lower ribs coupled with fever and/or painful urination can be due to a kidney infection. Avoid massage and call the physician immediately.



If the client has undergone recent surgery, consult with the treating physician before any circulatory massage. Ask about appropriate positions and precautions to massage.



Ask the client if there has been any loss of sensation or function in either the upper or the lower limbs that has not been discussed with their physician. If so, avoid pressure massage to the affected areas and have the client consult their physician without delay.



Avoid pressure on the vertebra immediately above and below as well as directly on the affected segment, as this increases the possibility of disc pressure on the nerve root.



Avoid low back or neck stretching or assisted stretching techniques as this may stress the disc. For low back conditions, be sensitive when performing hamstring stretches and stop if symptoms increase.



Warning: Be extra cautious with deep pressure, as the client may not be able to accurately determine their limits. When the nerve supply is compromised, the pain threshold can be reached without warning.



Prescriptions for pain, inflammation and spasms are many and varied. Clients may also self-medicate; ask before each visit what medications they have taken in the last 24 hours and check the precautions for each.



Teamwork between a massage therapist and a chiropractic physician will have a synergistic effect on the healing capacity of the client.



Ice therapy is especially helpful as an ongoing tool to control pain. Encourage the client to wear supportive shoes to minimize the extra stress on the spine.