



## Quality of Touch: Physical, Emotional, Mental and Spiritual Aspects by Rebecca Mauldin

Touch: it's one of our most basic needs and yet we usually don't spend much time considering it. We know there's a difference between "good touch" and "bad touch," yet these terms are often limited to the discussion of sexually inappropriate touch. When we go to a master bodyworker, we sense that there's something special about the quality of touch, but it can be hard to explain just what made it so special. It's helpful to consider four aspects of touch—the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual—to understand what's going on when we give and receive touch.

Physically, touch can run the gamut of experience from superficial or deep, fast or slow, smooth or abrupt, etc. Touch can have various physical effects on the recipient's body. It can scratch the skin, break up scar tissue, dissipate or cause bruising, distribute oils, and activate endocrine or nervous system responses.

Emotionally, we can communicate feelings such as delight, surprise, anger, fear, and sadness through our touch. On the receiving end, emotions can arise in response to getting touched. For example, many people have experienced profound emotional releases while getting a massage.

Mentally, touch can be driven by our thoughts and beliefs. We can bring our intellectual knowledge of muscular anatomy to the way in which we touch another. We may notice our thoughts and beliefs driving how, why, or where we touch another-- such as in the "right" way to shake hands in a business setting. Just as emotions surface in response to receiving touch, so do thoughts and beliefs. We may notice judgments about our bodies, memories, or sudden insights arise when we are touched.

Spiritually, our touch can be fueled from our essential nature in ways that bring connection to our spirit and to another and emphasizes our union with all. We can bring essential qualities such as love, peace, compassion, strength, and clarity into the touch we give. Receiving touch can also connect us with our essential natures and with the ground of Being. During and after bodywork, recipients may feel expanded, peaceful, and connected. Obstructions to one's true Self may be detected or transformed.

The next time you give or receive touch, notice what's going on in each of these dimensions. Recognizing the various qualities of touch can empower you beyond the concepts of what feels "good" and "bad" to more fully meet your deepest needs in the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual realms.

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