



The Emotional and Spiritual Aspects of Receiving Massage and Bodywork by Rebecca Mauldin

When we are touched by another person, we can focus on the physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual aspects of the touch. The physical aspect of touch is usually pretty accessible. We're used to experiencing the sensations of pressure, speed, pleasure or pain that accompany getting touched. For many of us, the mental qualities of our lives in general, not to mention touch, are very obvious. There's the constant soundtrack of commentary going through our heads, even when we want to relax and have a massage or share a foot rub with a friend.

It can be much harder to be aware of the emotional and spiritual qualities of touch. Sometimes we compartmentalize these aspects of life. Emotions get relegated to talks with other people, sad movies, weddings, and extreme sports. Our spiritual lives are saved for church, temple, mosque, or the meditation cushion.

In spite of how we might tend to compartmentalize them, there's no really no separation of the body, emotions, mind, and spirit in reality. This is great news because it points to using bodywork as a way to get "in touch" with our emotions and spirit.

As we receive touch, we can pay attention to the emotions that begin to surface. With just enough fortitude, we can meet these emotions with acceptance and even appreciation, allowing them to run their course. By being touched, we have an avenue for feeling what's in us to feel. It's a way to develop self-knowledge and authenticity. As an added bonus, when we allow the emotions to arise and run their course, we release them from our bodies and energy fields where they have been held, waiting for us to truly feel them.

Getting touched can open us into spiritual worlds as well. When we feel safe and are receiving bodywork from someone who is being present, we can notice our energy shift. We become connected to expansion and movement, united with something greater than ourselves, or aware of the qualities of our own essence as they arise. When we return to our ordinary state

of consciousness, we may return with the awareness of peace, love, compassion, clarity, strength, or whatever else the touch opened up within us.

To explore the emotional and spiritual dimensions of massage or bodywork, find a therapist with maturity, experience, good boundaries, a non-judgmental attitude, and the ability to stay present throughout the massage experience. If you chose, discuss your intentions for the session and determine if the therapist feels like a good match for you. During the session, stay open to the possibilities without becoming attached to things turning out in any specific way. Allow yourself to have whatever experience you might have (even if it turns out to be a nap!) and welcome any rejuvenation or enlivenment that might occur. Enjoy!

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