

## **MYOFASCIAL RELEASE THERAPY: What It Is, Who Needs It and How It Is Applied**



When seeking relief from chronic or acute pain, massage therapy can be very effective. One of the most efficient types of therapy available is MYOFASCIAL RELEASE THERAPY (MRT). This is a deep tissue massage that is different from others in that it uses no oils and goes into the deep muscle tissue. It can be very effective whether the client is having a new, severe muscle distress or long term pain.

MRT is different from the Swedish Massage, which is very good for relaxation and treatment of less acute problems.

In order to receive an MRT treatment, the client only needs to be willing to relax and let the therapist work in a deep, quiet way. The treatment is usually given on a table with the client disrobed and covered with a sheet. However, the techniques can be used in any situation or setting - even an executive massage chair or a kitchen chair can be used for this universally applicable method. Most often there is little or no pain, though the client should be prepared to experience a "feels good" pain as part of the release.

With the client in a relaxed position, the therapist uses different holding techniques to allow his or her hands, as well as energy, to sink deep into the muscles. One part of the body is held until "releases" occur. These can be felt as the release of muscle soreness, as slight pain, or as relaxation of the muscle. What is happening is that the fascia, the thin fiber covering all muscles, bones, and organs, is released from its position of tension - caused by injury, surgery or trauma (emotional as well as physical). The fascia then - all at once or gradually over a period of time - goes back into it's natural state of ease and comfort - affording the recipient relief from whatever pain or trauma they were having.

That is to say, you get relief in a very short period of time. Some feel it right after the treatment, some a couple of days after the treatment. The client will then experience a greater amount of change in additional treatments. Once every two weeks usually works well, though some prefer every week, or even more at first, in order to go further faster. This is not a "quick fix," but I have seen more results from Myofascial Release Therapy than from any form of massage, and my clients report vast improvement quite consistently. (Continued...)

Recently, a client sent me this note after her first session:

*Thank you so much for a wonderful MRT session yesterday! It has been very interesting to monitor my reaction to it. As you said, especially yesterday afternoon, I did have some residual pain, interestingly enough at the times when I was bending forward to reach for something, I felt many little isolated pains in my back. A shower really helped with that. I also felt so relaxed that I even ended up taking a little nap later in the afternoon (something I haven't done in years!).*

*This morning, however, I really noticed some benefits. I ran 11 miles, and I did not have *\*any\** shoulder pains! I felt much more relaxed in my running and it was easier to maintain good posture and keep my arms and shoulders down.*

*I am very much looking forward to the benefits of additional treatment. You really have a gift! Thank you again for sharing it with me.*

Sometimes, as with the client who wrote the above note, the MRT treatment may produce additional, brief pain. This should be seen as further “release” work which will pass in a short amount of time; some form of hydrotherapy (use of water) usually helps alleviate this.

Also, it is important to note that work may need to be done in an area other than where the pain is being experienced. For example, in the case of the person above, a marathon runner with pain in the upper back and shoulders, we had to work on hips. The problem was emanating from the fascia that was bunched up there; the fascia needed to be released so the muscles could all move more easily. The client was thinking it might be a postural problem, and she was right. But it's not like she could just hold herself differently; the fascia needed to hold the posture differently. That is, the relationship of fascia to muscle and bones needed to change.

Usually after a few treatments, the client will notice a change in how they hold themselves and how their muscles function, and they will get relief from pain. No problem is too small or too large to get some benefit from Myofascial Release Therapy. I am confident that MRT can help relieve whatever muscular pain you are experiencing.



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