

Benefits of PetMassage™ for Dogs



Massage is a natural process that you can use to help your dog maintain a better quality of life. It gives him the means to live his life to its fullest potential. Massage works on your dog's body on many levels. Let's discuss how basic touch benefits dogs, the touch of massage, and the effects in particular, of PetMassage™.

Dogs are emotional creatures. They have thoughts. They have feelings. They experience pain, loneliness, and anxiety. Their behaviors are all rooted in their memories of their feelings associated with past experiences. These include their physical memories and those passed to them through generations of breeding, their cultural memories. Early emotional conditioning is directly connected to the amount and quality of touch they receive. Research on puppies who were the recipients of touch was compared to lack of touch puppies. There are clearly differences in physical and emotional development. Those deprived of touch have smaller statures, stress dwarfism, reduced socialization skills and depressed immune systems. Their world view for the rest of their lives is predicated on their perception that they are smaller, weaker and more susceptible to disease and injuries.



Early lack of touch causes a puppy to think and move in ways that are protective. The "failure to thrive" puppy shows that the touch a puppy receives has powerful implications, affecting his world view! This is a description of a dog who is the runt of a litter, or one who has been separated or rejected by its mother. The head is held low, the elbows are turned out; the fore paws turn in. The paws are more splayed; the spine has a convex curvature and inhibited flexibility. The tail is held tucked between the legs so that the pheromones normally excreted from the anus are capped off and the belly, feels more

protected. As this posturing continues it becomes habitual. And with repetition, the posture along with the effects becomes hardwired into the unconscious. In his contracted position, the dog cannot breathe deeply. He cannot move his limbs through a natural range of motion. He cannot effectively socialize or communicate with other dogs or people. His normal growth and development is stifled from poor circulation, lack of exercise and a retarded immune system.

Those who begin their lives receiving touch experience their lives in more comfort and ease. They are healthier, happier, more willing to accept affection and training. They are more fulfilled dogs. Throughout dogs' lives, touch continues to be a necessity. Through touch, they feel affection and reassurance. Touch provides them a means of processing socialization, support and balance.

When we think of the touch used in massage, which is front-loaded with nurturing intention and experience, we usually think of it as affecting primarily the physical body. When someone asks about benefits, the most obvious responses and the easiest to give are that massage increases circulation; it enhances flexibility and improves metabolic efficiency. At this level of understanding of massage; the pushing and pulling of skin and muscles and the moving of the limbs in passive range of motion, could be classified as another form of exercise. It develops dog's muscle tone and can increase the depth and rate of respiration. All dogs benefit from basic massage.

Many dogs kept indoors have guardian/owners who do not take them for daily walks. Their primary exercise is moving from the couch to the food dish and back. They spend their lives on the carpet and on the furniture. When they have no way to work off the energy in their food; it turns into fat. The fat makes it harder for them to breathe, and puts additional strain on their hearts and joints. There is no opportunity to increase respiration rate and expel dust and chemical toxins clogging their lungs. They do not engage in the large joint movement which has the effect of increasing the movement of tissue fluid from the extremities to the heart, aka, lymphatic drainage (their immune system). Another undesirable result of unresolved and unrelenting fluid pressures within tissues,

joints and fascia caused by fat are internal growths. These dogs, and others whose health are compromised in other ways, desperately need massage.

The increased circulation that dogs' bodies receive during any basic full body massage session is equivalent to about a half-hour leisurely walk in the park. During a massage session, dogs also experience important psychosocial interactions. Massage enhances their trust quotient, strengthening their connection, their bond with their humans and as such, can be a vital part of behavior modification, education and training. The repetitive movements of a massage resonate with dogs' need for the comfort they feel in routines.



Another benefit is that massage is a way to maintain an ongoing assessment of your dog. You will know how your dog's body feels and responds to your touch. As you become more experienced and knowledgeable, you become more aware of how your dog is moving and acting. Any deviation that you notice from his established behavioral baseline is an indicator that there is some imbalance in his body. Any unfamiliar heat, shape, texture or reaction to your touch, may be a reason to pay closer attention and possibly seek your vet's guidance.

Any touch, any massage is better than no massage. Massage has the intention of moving the parts of the body to effect beneficial change. We've seen how basic massage is necessary for older or stay-at-home dogs. It helps in training and toning and socializing and balancing dogs of all ages. Sport dogs and competition dogs develop stronger, faster, more symmetrical bodies with massage. They also get fewer injuries and mend faster when they do.

Medical massage is especially effective in helping dogs in post traumatic, post surgery rehabilitation. It is presented as a type of gentle physical therapy. The work focuses primarily on the affected parts of the animal's body. The orientation has a Western medical, mechanistic vision. That is, manipulation of a limb within a specific range and the application of specific techniques of strokes, will have the specific effects of causing X body part to experience a particular predetermined change. The results are measurable. The treatment requires that each of the participants work together in one of two roles, helper (the canine massage practitioner) and helpee (the dog). The canine massage practitioner works on the dog; the dog passively receives the work. This is probably the most attractive to those of us who were raised to be "doers" and "fixers" and "controllers." As an RN, when I would change a dressing and apply a bandage, I was in the role of "doer-fixer-controller." It was a great, productive feeling. But I now know there was something that could have enhanced the experience.

The form of PetMassage™ began by using the techniques involved in Swedish, or medical massage and incorporating variations of human energy bodywork. After their massage sessions, or series of sessions, dogs usually appeared different; their bodies seemed somehow radiant, their movements, more relaxed, they appeared to be generally more comfortable in their bodies, and they were reported to be more comfortable with their families, too.

We realized that dogs have an inherent intuitive drive to achieve wellness and balance. The specific sequences and pressures of PetMassage™ help dogs to increase their body awareness. The objectives are to draw their awareness from where they usually live, in the external, outwardly focusing, to their bodies. The sensations can either be physical or sub-physical. When they locate a point that feels comfortable or uncomfortable they create opportunities for intuitive choice making. They may choose to move into more comfort or remain where they are. Where they are, could be healthy and powerful. It could be blocked, stagnant, dysfunctional and painful, yet safe, since it is a known experience. Dogs, unlike humans, usually appear to choose to move toward comfort.

Their choices engender tiny changes, course corrections in the way they need to function to be more micro and macro-comfortable; more micro and macro-balanced. It alters their perspective about their whole body, including every misaligned or out of balance part which now moves with alacrity, within

the dog's potential, toward absolute optimization. The choices they make affect their body chemistry. It works on removing lactic acid from muscle tissue. It balances hormone production and provides emotional stability. It affects skin and internal organ system functioning as well. This is empowerment that resonates throughout the body. It raises the entire body functioning to a higher, more effective frequency.

PetMassage™ charges the dogs with the responsibility of knowing and acting in their own best interests and welfare. Before beginning a massage, we always ask permission. Consent is necessary in establishing a relationship based on trust and respect. Both the practitioner and the dog need to understand what is going on and that they must participate. Implicit in his permission is his acceptance of this responsibility.

We continue to get permission with each touch; although it is not done consciously. Similar to the intuitive use of muscle testing in which we ask our bodies to give us the correct answer about what is best for us, your dog's body tracks wherever your hands palpate. His tissues respond by accepting, refusing or redirecting them. Your dog feels his unique set of holding patterns by the comfort or discomfort he identifies. PetMassage™ initiates a multi-faceted mind-body conversation within the dog.

PetMassage™ has evolved into a unique skill set to use touch to assist dogs to create, maintain and stay connected to this "inner motivation." The philosophy is based on honesty and integrity. Don't all massage practitioners have an ethical underpinning based in honesty and integrity? Of course they do. That's why they are practicing. They have chosen to do something useful to help dogs. The honesty and integrity we are talking about now, is the dogs'.



We want to create an environment within the dog where optimal functioning can occur. This is the reason that PetMassage™ is such a good partner with the practice of traditional veterinary medicine. When the inner environment is ambient, whatever allopathic treatments that are given will be more effective. The receptors and pathways open. The dog accepts treatment, embraces healing and recovers faster and more completely.

Our job is to support the inner workings of his intuitive nature. Our hands respond to the sensations felt within his body. They act, coaxing and supporting any movement felt within the tissues. We witness movement or stillness as the tissues move toward where they need to be. The body's energy can open, expand, shut down, contract and move toward balance. Whatever changes within the dog's body are his to choose and his to affect. Creating balance in one part of the body also affects systems of harmonic or sympathetic frequencies throughout the rest of the body. Massage of the shoulder, for example, can affect changes in the tail, in the digestive system, and/or to the rough patch of tissue on the elbow. There is no way to observe the subtle variations in perception and acceptance that develop along neural and energetic pathways. There is no way to discover what or which level is affected.

We observe that the tissues of the body beneath our fingers soften and relax. We project that cellular memories trapped within holding patterns of tissues have the opportunity for review. The holding patterns are physical and emotional. They could be the way a dog moves his head at a trot, the manner in which he drops his body into a sit, or the way he responds when approached by a child. Physical and emotional holding patterns are tightly intertwined. What is released is as important as that a release occurred. Each release opens the door for more opportunities to make choices. With each PetMassage™, experience, through heightened awareness and resilience, dogs accept new bodies.

While working with the rhythms and movements of the fascia, a PetMassage™ practitioner observes how her body feels along with how her dog's body feels to her hands. For example, within the fascia,

there are held memories -- always. Holding your thumbs up and out during the massage naturally allows the release of negativity and aggression bound within your fascia. As an associative process, it also gives your dog the opportunity to release the tenacious memories he's holding onto that could be restraining him within a negative, depressed or physically incapacitated state...keeping him from enjoying a full, happy life.

PetMessage™ has developed specific patterns of touches and strokes to invigorate the energy vectors of your dog's flow of ch'i. Working via the neuromuscular and meridian pathways, PetMessage™ vectoring encourages dogs to make connections within their deepest subconscious



levels, within cellular frequencies. Focused breathwork and specialized earth-bound body mechanics, based in the traditional movements of martial arts, help dog and practitioner maintain their connections and intentions to be continuously present. These techniques are taught in our hands-on workshops. With repeated practice with other students and dogs, students learn to coordinate new ways of breathing with new ways of moving their bodies with new ways of perceiving dogs' bodies, their gaits and their connections with them.

Many human massage therapists who have learned these techniques maintain that these movements, which are the very foundation of PetMessage™, were not taught in their massage schools and with this new experiential understanding they can use their bodies, as effective conveyers for energy. Their bodies function as to catch, redirect and ground energetic forces in and around them and their dogs.

In PetMessage™ there is very little distinction between provider and the receiver; the "doer-fixer-controller" and "helpee." Both come together to create a greater entity, a relationship. The experience involves everything internally and externally, that is happening to the dog, herself and their immediate environment. Whatever happens to or within each has an influence on everything else within the relationship. For example, the dog may push your hand with his paw; you may sense a gurgling in your gut; a UPS truck may park in the driveway outside; the air conditioning may switch on. We've described, rejection or redirection with the paw push; the practitioner's body asking for attention -- inner muscle testing at work; external distractions that can affect the dog's ability to stay focused, such as a change in sound, temperature and air circulation. Each of these events has an affect on the massage. Each is observed and accepted as an element that supports the dog and the practitioner in their PetMessage™ processing.

One way for a practitioner to gauge the effectiveness of the session is for her to think about whether she sensed any variations in her perceptions about her own body or relationships. The results of the session may not be immediately apparent to either the dog or the practitioner. It may take a while for the new reeducation to work its way up to the conscious. If one element of the relationship sees change, every element has been affected.

PetMessage™ is compatible with every known form of holistic and traditional animal care. It helps every system within the dog function better. It opens energetic, neuromuscular and intracellular pathways. It makes receptors more receptive. It enlists the dog to rely on his intuitive intention for body integrity and honesty in his inner body communication. It supports the dog when he asks his body, "What is truly in my best interest?" and supports him along in his process of subconscious choice making. The process of PetMessage™ assists the dog to redirect his life force energy; his ch'i. It supports a dog's inner awareness and drive to channel his intuitive drive to move toward homeostasis, wellness and balance. PetMessage™ dramatically influences every physical and emotional aspect of a dog's life.

---Jonathan Rudinger,
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