




**Creating happy,
healthy
children...**

**...through
massage in
schools**


Kay White
AAMT conference, Cairns, 2011



About the presenter

Kay White:

- Infants/Primary/TAFE teacher & teacher trainer
- Massage therapist since 1998
- Certified Infant Massage Instructor (IAMI)
- Massage in Schools Program Instructor 2005
- Massage in Schools Program Trainer 2007
- Next.....?



Workshop overview

Session 1

- The need for touch
- Massage and children across the world
- Cultural attitudes towards touch
- Research on massage and children
- What it's like for children in schools today
- A fun massage activity

Session 2

- Pair massage
- Programs being used in schools around the world, and the results that are being seen
- The benefits of massage in schools
- A typical massage activity for students in schools



Workshop overview continued...

Session 3

- The physiology of stress / relaxation and its implications for student learning
- Group activity – creating a simple massage routine
- What massage in schools may look like
- Implications for your practice
- Conclusion and question time





Let's massage!

But first.....



ASK PERMISSION

of the person you would like to massage

and

When you're finished, say

"Thank you for letting me massage you."

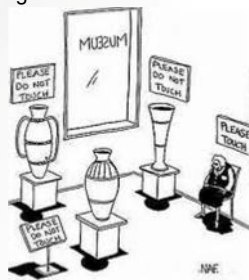


The need for touch

- Development of touch in utero
- Oxytocin and birth / breastfeeding
- Role of touch in attachment
- Healthy development

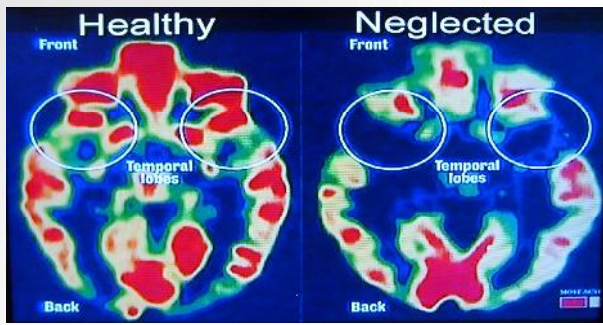
What happens when the need for touch isn't met?

- Inappropriate touch
- 'Skin hunger'
- Lack of connection
- Developmental delays





Scans of children's brains





History of massage and children

- To strengthen limbs and joints and promote healthy growth
- For detoxification after birth (India)
- To assist with digestive processes
- To promote secure attachments
- To improve sleep patterns
- To improve sensory awareness



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7V04Y8pl_YI



Touch in different cultures

San Juan, Puerto Rico - 180
 Paris, France - 110
 Gainesville, Florida - 2
 London, England - 0



Attitudes towards touch

- What attitudes do you come across both generally and in your practice?



- How do these impact on your ideas about children massaging in schools?





Massage and children today

- Mother/father/caregiver massaging baby
- Mother/father/caregiver massaging older child
- Siblings massaging each other
- Children massaging parents or others in family
- Staff massaging children in daycare or early learning centres
- Therapists massaging children





Research on massage and children

Clinical studies also show that massage may be an effective treatment for young children and adolescents with a wide range of health problems, including:

- Autism
- Atopic dermatitis/eczema
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Bulimia
- Cystic fibrosis
- Diabetes
- Rheumatoid arthritis





So why massage in schools?





Let's massage!





Let's massage!





New Zealand



Child Connection (Eva Scherer)

1. **Discovery** for children aged 1-5 years (Module I)
Touch/massage, balancing games – for parents to interact with children
2. **Children Massaging Children (CMC)** for children aged 5 - 12 years (Module II) Songs and massage – taught to primary school teachers
3. **Safe Touch - Healthy Touch** - for adolescents aged 12 - 16 years (Module III) – 18 minute massage done in pairs & conducted by a trained instructor



Sweden to the US



Peaceful Touch

- Began in Stockholm in 1995
- more than 300,000 children receiving Peaceful Touch on a regular basis
- Peaceful Touch is an unofficial standard in Swedish preschools, elementary schools and homes
- Trainings there are offered under the auspices of Axelson Institute in Stockholm
- Today Peaceful Touch USA is active in California, New Mexico, and Connecticut, and open to opportunities in other states



Denmark

'Fri for mobberi' (Free from Bullying) (an initiative of Save the Children)

'Small social practices' aimed at childcare workers, parents and children

- Bodyguard arrangements.
- Massaging. Children learn to give one another tactile massages. Special stories and songs are written for the massage programs, where the children take turns massaging one another's backs.
- The children are encouraged to get involved when a friend is forced out of the group interaction.
- Drawing. The children draw and talk about their experiences and opinions regarding friendship. The parents are subsequently invited to an exhibition of the children's drawings



Worldwide

Massage in Schools Program

- Originated in Sweden late 1990s – Mia Elmsäter and Sylvie Hétu
- Introduced in the UK 2000
- First training in Australia 2005
- Now 2 Trainers in Australia and 25 worldwide, with 6 more in training





Common elements

- That touch is necessary for human growth and development
- That the calming hormone, oxytocin, is activated through touch
- That a permission process supports healthy touch and helps establish good boundaries (RESPECT)



Benefits of peer massage in schools

Brainstorm in groups of 4 for 20 minutes.
Think of the possible benefits of massage in schools for:

- Children
- Teachers
- Schools
- Families
- Society



What are the results?

- Calmer, happier classrooms and children (and teachers!)
- Increased concentration
- Less aggression and bullying behaviour
- Children learn the language and actions of self-protection
- Promotion of healthy self-esteem
- Better relationships between children
- Better management of anger and emotional upsets
- Better performance of children with difficulties
- A noticeable flow-on effect in all areas of life (in and out of school)





A quote to ponder

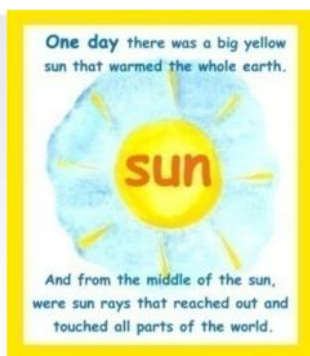
“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”

Leo Buscalgia





Let's massage!





The stress response

Sympathetic system is activated





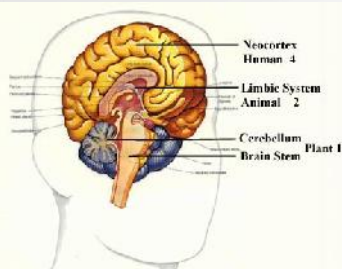
The relaxation response

Parasympathetic system is activated





Physiology of stress and implications for student learning



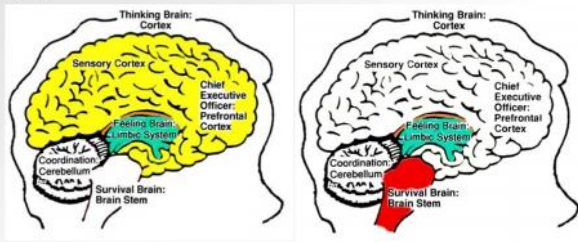
A) **Neocortex, or Human Brain**, is the most recent area, where we perform high-level thinking and complex integrative tasks.

B) **Limbic System, or Mammalian Brain**, critical for emotions and for memory,

C) **Cerebellum and Stem, or Reptilian Brain**, that regulates basic vital variables such as breathing, heartbeat and motor coordination



What happens during stress?



Calm

Stressed



Implications for schools...

"Being highly emotionally aroused literally makes us stupid"

Deborah Bone -
www.startnowtraining.co.uk





The role of oxytocin

"The oxytocin that good relationships produce is our personal healing nectar."



Dr Kerstin Uvnäs-Moberg



Get creative!

- In groups of 4, pick a topic/heading from the box and create your own short (2 minutes or so) massage routine that would be suitable for primary school students
- Take **30 minutes** to create your routine, then a few groups will (hopefully!) volunteer to demonstrate to the rest of us
- Your routine may be done in pairs, a circle, a line... whatever works for you!





What massage in school might look like

- Whole classes / combining classes and age groups / whole schools
- Timing? After a break to settle students / using short sessions for re-focusing
- A way of including ALL children
- Creating a suitable environment: limiting noise levels, interruptions and distractions
- Who would be involved: teachers, teacher aides, students, parents
- Having students provide massages at special school functions





Implications for your practice

- Massaging children in your clinic
- Conducting workshops for children and/or family groups
- Training to become an infant massage instructor or a Massage in Schools Program instructor



Creating Happy, Healthy Children through Peer Massage in Schools

Programs

Massage in Schools Program: www.messageinschools.com , www.messageinschools.com.au

Peaceful Touch www.peacefultouch.net

Child Connection www.childconnection.org.nz

'Free from Bullying' (Denmark) www.redbarnet.dk/Default.aspx?ID=8574

Books

Field, Tiffany (2003) *Touch*, MIT Press, MA, USA

Field, Tiffany (Ed) (2004) *Touch and Massage in Early Childhood Development*, Johnson & Johnson Pediatric Institute, LLC, USA

Hetu, Sylvie & Elmsater, Mia, *Massage in Schools Programme: manual for instructors*, UR Publications & Programmes Inc, Montreal

Hetu, Sylvie & Elmsater, Mia (2010) *Touch in Schools: a revolutionary strategy for replacing bullying with respect and for reducing violence*, UR Publications & Programmes Inc, Montreal

Leboyer, Frederick (1977) *Loving Hands: the traditional Indian art of baby massage*, Collins, London

McClure, Vimala (2000) *Infant Massage: a handbook for loving parents*, Bantam Books, New York

Montagu, Ashley (1986) *Touching: the human significance of the skin*, Harper & Row, New York

Szalavitz, Maia & Perry, Bruce (2010) *Born for Love: why empathy is essential – and endangered*, Harper Collins, New York

Uvnas Moberg, Kerstin (2003) *The Oxytocin Factor: tapping the hormone of calm, love and healing*, Da Capo Press, Cambridge MA, USA

Research on Massage in Schools

Morgan, Jill (2006) *A Child's Place: the effects of massage on children*, Massage Australia, Issue 54

Morgan, Jill (2006) *Children Massaging Children: a research project*, Massage Australia, Issue 55

Woolfson, Richard et al (2005) **The Renfrewshire 'Massage in Schools Programme' (MISP) An evaluation of its impact in a primary school** <http://www.messageinschoolsassociation.org.uk/index.php?id=40,0,0,1,0,0>

Articles

Brotherson, Sean (2005) *Understanding Brain Development in Young Children*, Bright Beginnings #4, North Dakota State University, USA

Carlson, Frances & Nelson, Bryan (2006) *Reducing Aggression with Touch*, Dimensions of Early Childhood, Volume 34, Number 3. www.peacefultouch.net/Resources/ReducingAggressionwithTouch.pdf

Elston, Anne (2010) *Teach Them Well* Massage Australia, Issue 64

La Plante, Clare (2007) *The Kids Are All Right*, Massage Therapy Journal, Fall 2007, American Massage Therapy Association. <http://www.amtamassage.org/articles/3/MTJ/detail/1651>

Tennant, Victoria (2005) *The Powerful Impact of Stress and Calm on Health, Behavior and Learning*. <http://www.marthalakecov.org/~building/spneeds/inclusion/teaching/tennant.htm>

Trower, Carol (2005) *The Tranquil Classroom*, Massage Australia, Issue 51

von Knorring et al, (2008) *Massage decreases aggression in children: a long-term study*, In *Foundation Acta Pædeatrica*, **97**, pp1265 – 1269.

Other Websites of Interest

Centre for Child Mental Health www.childmentalhealthcentre.org

International Association of Infant Massage www.iaim.org.au

Touch Research Institute, Miami (Tiffany Field) www.miami.edu/touch-research/

The Tranquil Classroom

Nurturing Children's Potential Through Massage

By Carol Trower
RGN., RM., RHV., Post Grad Dip
Diploma in Reflexology.

Does the thought of facing a roomful of stressed, tense and aggressive eight-year-olds, day after day, appeal to you? Yet this is the norm for many school teachers. Happily relief is at hand and the answer surprisingly enough is massage. Here Carol Trower tells us about a successful program that has been undertaken in the United Kingdom to tackle this very subject.

Many children in today's society are stressed and tense and they take this negative energy daily into the school environment; of course, this has a severe impact on their own academic and social learning and on that of those around them.

'Relaxing', 'peaceful' and 'calm' are not often the words used to describe the atmosphere in any primary school classroom but, as more and more children in the UK participate in the 'Massage in Schools

Programme' (MISP), these are words echoed up and down the country.

The 'Massage in Schools Programme' (MISP) was officially founded in the UK in 2000 by Mia Elmsäter from Sweden and Sylvie Héru from Canada. Both believe in the contagious effect of positive touch and together had the vision 'that every child attending school should experience positive and nurturing touch every day – everywhere in the world.'



The program is based on the belief that respectful touch encourages:

- self-esteem
- confidence
- and mutual respect

Today, five years on, this vision is becoming a reality. The positive touch programme is seen as strengthening the self-confidence of children of all ages, from nursery through to high school, by introducing a respectful touch into the curriculum.

HOW DOES THE PROGRAMME WORK?

To achieve maximum benefit the programme should consist of daily sessions of about ten minutes duration. Clothed children sit in pairs. The child in front is relaxed and still, while the second child makes gentle hand movements on her back.

But before any physical contact takes place, the child giving the massage must ask the recipient for permission to touch. This is a vital part of this practice, which is designed to encourage respect between individuals and awareness that touch, with permission only, can be a soothing, nurturing and happy experience.

An MISP instructor leads the session and demonstrates the movements. After five minutes the children swap places and the second child receives a calming massage.

The programme can also be adapted to different subjects within the school curriculum.

Positive, nurturing touch is relaxing, leaving a child with a feeling of well-being and contentment. Blood circulation, the immune system

and body awareness are all boosted, with tense muscles being relieved and relaxed. When the body relaxes the mind notices.

HOW HAS THE PROGRAMME BEEN RECEIVED BY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS?

I have been involved with the programme since 2000 and introduced it into the first school in the UK as a whole school positive behaviour programme.

A small research study has evaluated the programme. Qualitative findings show:

- a reduction in bullying and aggressive behaviour
- greater empathy skills
- more friendships
- and a calmer environment

All this has led to children being happier at school, having more friends, working harder and experiencing improved concentration within a quieter classroom. Children report that classmates argue and fight less in the playground and bullying is reduced. It appears that children who give each other massage do not fight!

Head teachers and governors of participating schools are getting behind the programme:

- a) because participating children are developing the skills needed for learning both academically and socially and
- b) because the programme is achieving a positive community image.

Teachers enjoy the calmer atmosphere of their classrooms; they find that children are more eager to learn. Those benefiting most particularly are children with behavioural and learning difficulties.

Comments include:

"They all really enjoy it and are calmer and have far better concentration levels after massage".

Teacher, London

“Since the massage classes began there have been no incidents of bad behaviour in the class.”
Teacher, Devon.

The best predictor of later success for children lies in their disposition to learn. This disposition includes:

- motivation
- self-esteem
- respect for others
- aspiration
- and the urge to master skills.

The Massage in Schools Programme helps children in all these areas.

WHAT ARE THE POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF THE PROGRAMME?

Professor Kerstin Uvnas-Moberg, of the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, has clinically studied the effects of massage and claims that massage increases the peace and calm hormone oxytocin, which reduces stress and increases social bonding. A relaxed, happy child can concentrate better and feels better about his or her ability to cope with the day. Instead of reacting instantly to feelings of anger, embarrassment or confusion, this positive self-awareness gives the child time to develop emotional intelligence.

Therefore massage can play a vital role in a child's life. It is a very important means of interaction and can open up positive channels of communication within a classroom setting and within the home.

Is ten minutes a day, spent on a light, respectful massage that can help children

gain impulse control and respect for their class mates a good investment? I believe it is.

It is difficult to describe the immense rewards of seeing children benefiting from our most neglected sense of touch through this simple but effective, positive nurturing touch professionally delivered programme. Let's just say that it's great to see children happy and showing care and respect for each other.

Comments from some children include:

“Massage makes me feel happy and I have loads more friends”.
Boy, age 6 years, London.

“Since starting the massage I do not get bullied because I am friendlier”.
Girl, age 8 years.

“It transforms the usual rabble into a place you like to be”. Child, Victoria, Aust.

THE PROGRAMME IN AUSTRALIA

Earlier this year fellow MISP Trainer Jean Barlow and I introduced the programme into Australia and New Zealand with the support of the first Australian MISP instructor, Kate Mitchell. Kate previously trained in the UK. The two-day MISP instructor courses were held in Perth, Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland.

Since the programme was implemented in Australia, these pioneer instructors have issued very encouraging reports showing the huge difference this fun, positive

touch programme is making within their classrooms.

I am especially impressed by the way the Australian instructors have used their skills and expertise for the benefit of the whole group and with their ground-breaking preparation work for the programme's continued expansion.

It's very inspiring to know people who are involved in this programme are only a click away in today's technological age.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carol Trower is an English health professional with a vast amount of experience and knowledge gained as a nurse, midwife and health visitor. She has a post-graduate diploma in 'Promoting Child Emotional Health', a subject that continues to be a growing passion. Carol is a reflexologist and Infant Massage Instructor. As a Massage in Schools Programme Instructor and Trainer she has been a tireless pro-active pioneer of the programme in the UK. Carol introduced the programme into the first school in England as a whole school strategy for positive behaviour and improving self-esteem. She has undertaken a pilot MISP research. Carol is chair of England, Wales and Northern Ireland Massage in Schools Association.



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