

Conscious Touch by Kay Ross

It's ironic that many bodyworkers/healers whose work involves direct hands-on contact with clients often feel tense, tired and drained at the end of the day. They sometimes take on board their clients' "stuff", and focus so much on "fixing" their clients that they don't take care of themselves while they work.

However, if you're a bodyworker/healer, your work shouldn't mean that your clients' pains and problems merely get transferred to you. That would be counter-productive – when you're tense, tired and drained you can't do effective work, you soon become burned out, and your clients don't get the results they deserve. So it's important to take care of yourself while you're being of service to others.

How do you do that? One useful technique is "conscious touch", a concept from Body Harmony, a hands-on bodywork modality that works on the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual levels. (I'm sure other bodywork modalities have similar concepts, although perhaps under different names.)

"Conscious touch" is a two-way dance between practitioner and client: on the one hand it means being present, centred and aware of yourself as you work; on the other hand it means being acutely aware of the effect of your touch as you approach, contact, explore and disengage from your client's tissue. When you're aware of your own breath, posture, thoughts, words and heart, as well as the flow of energy in your body and your connection to the earth and to spirit, you're more relaxed, your touch is simultaneously deeper and softer, and you're more open to intuition. That helps your clients to feel more safe, comfortable, trusting and aware. So it's not about the technique that you do "to" your clients; it's about the quality of your own self that you bring to the dance, and the atmosphere of respect and safety that you create for your clients. That's when miracles happen.

A simple example: if you're not even aware that your shoulders are tense, you're unlikely to do anything to change that – you have to notice it first. When your shoulders are tense, that tension is transmitted through your arms and hands into your client's tissue. Although your client may not be consciously aware of that, their tissue will know, and it won't relax or move as freely as it could. Also, when you're tense, you're less sensitive to what's happening in your client's tissue.

Here are some tips for working consciously:

- Breathe, breathe, breathe! Whenever you catch yourself not breathing, breathe.
- Stay aware of your balance and connection to gravity – keep your feet on the ground.
- Conserve your energy – don't use effort to hold your arms and shoulders up against gravity; surrender to the support of your bodywork table or chair whenever you can.

- Keep your knees and jaw soft.
- Smile!
- Imagine sending love from your heart to every cell in your own body, and also through your hands, voice, eyes and thoughts into your client's tissue. (See the exercise by Dan Millman below.)
- Constantly scan your body – if you notice an area of tension, breathe into it and imagine it relaxing.
- Ask yourself: “How can I make my hands even softer?”, and then relax them. (Having soft hands does not necessarily mean light pressure – sometimes it's absolutely appropriate to delve deep and to press quite hard.)
- As you approach and contact your client's tissue, take a moment to sense the tissue's response before you proceed (the same applies when you remove your hands).
- Trust your first intuition about any situation.
- Check in with yourself and ask what you need to do to take care of yourself. Then do it.
- Talk to your client; be honest about what you're observing, thinking and feeling. If you need to shift your arm, move your chair or take a pee break, say so.

In his book “Everyday Enlightenment”, author Dan Millman offers a simple exercise in connecting with your heart energy: “Right now, instead of focusing your attention on this page or on your thoughts, place your attention in your heart. Feel your heart. (It may help to place a hand there at first.)” He then suggests remaining aware of your heart as you speak to, think about, look at, listen to or touch other people.

Signals that you're not being “conscious” while you work with a client include:

- you feel sleepy;
- you're thinking about the argument you had with your lover last night instead of paying attention to what's happening in your own body and your client's body right here and now;
- you've stopped breathing;
- you feel cramp somewhere in your body (because you're not in a comfortable position);
- you're not aware of what you're feeling in your own or your client's body;
- your client says you're pressing too hard or not hard enough;
- your ego jumps in with judgements about yourself or your client (so you're no longer open to intuition);
- you've switched to “automatic pilot” and are just repeating the same old movements or techniques that you always use, without respecting the uniqueness of the person in front of you.

Finally, at the end of a session, before your client leaves, it's helpful to separate your energies from your client's energies. I learnt the following process (which takes less than a minute) from Dr Elaine Woodall, a medical intuitive and healer

from New York who visited Hong Kong in October 2004. As Elaine says, "Good energy hygiene is as essential as good personal hygiene."

Visualise yourself and your client, then silently ask your higher self or guide to:

- take all of your client's energy out of you and send it back to your client;
- take all of your client's energetic cords that they sent you, and send them back to your client;
- take all of your energy out of your client and bring it back to you;
- take all of your energetic cords that you sent to your client, and bring them back to you.

Also, it's a good idea to wash your hands, splash your face and have a drink of water (not coffee or a fizzy, sugary drink) before you welcome your next client.

The aim of all this is to work effortlessly and gracefully, like a Tai Chi master. When you put these ideas into practice, your clients will achieve better results and your work will become almost a healing meditation for yourself, so that you'll feel energised rather than drained at the end of the day. That can only be good for you, your clients and your business!

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"**Kay Ross** is a Hong Kong-based bodyworker/healer, and also a marketing consultant & coach, editor and copywriter. To learn more, visit www.kayross.com."