



Gill is the self appointed ambassador for Massage Therapy in the UK and pioneer in the industry. She is the owner of Essentials for Health School of Massage, a therapy business expert, author and award winning entrepreneur.

She has brought programmes such as Positive Touch in the Neonatal Unit, The Infant Massage Instructors Certificate, Massage in Schools Programme and Massage Conferences to the UK. Celebrating 21 years in the Industry this year has culminated in Gill writing her Manifesto for a Pro-Touch Society.

Gill Tree

PRO-TOUCH MANIFESTO

This manifesto seeks to raise the professional status and recognition of the Massage industry; celebrating its contribution to individuals, companies and the economy. It intends to influence society to become more nurturing, pro-touch and to push for Massage to be more frequently considered particularly for chronic (long-term) conditions where GPs have identified gaps in their effectiveness.



“Half of all GP appointments, and £7 in every £10 spent on health and social care, is taken up caring for people living with long-term conditions. As the population ages, the proportion of people affected and the demand on health and social services will continue to rise. A growing body of evidence shows that, done properly, a system that supports people with long-term conditions to manage their own health has benefits for the person, their health and for health services.”¹

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Massage provides a preventative role in health care whilst also reducing the symptoms of many diseases and disorders. It is widely used in managing back pain, has a role to play in reducing absenteeism at work and is employed in specialist hospitals in assisting in recovery from treatment and surgery. It can raise self esteem and self worth amongst the sick, mentally ill and elderly and is widely provided throughout the UK in hospices often by Massage therapists who volunteer their time to improve quality of life and reduce the pain and suffering of the terminally ill. We can all benefit from the stress reducing effects of Massage. One in five visits to GP surgeries are stress related.

*"The total number of cases of stress in 2011/12 was 428,000 (40%) out of a total of 1 073 000 for all work-related illnesses"*²

We need to create a cultural shift that recognises the crucial importance of touch for our mental and physical wellbeing and embrace the professional role of the Massage therapist as a catalyst for the release of stress, tension and stimulated good health.

Massage is not a luxury for the few, a reward or treat but an essential, cost effective and often cost saving therapy. Nurturing touch for the infant is more important than food. Without it a child can suffer marasmus- they wither away and die. Research tells us that a society where children are held closely to their mother for their first year in life is 60% more likely to be

a non-violent society. Beyond infancy; it is equally important for a grown person to stay chemically balanced.

*"The presence or absence of touch is not only the distinguishing factor between a healthy and well adjusted individual or a violent one, but also how cultural practices regarding touch are responsible for creating either violent or non violent societies."*³

The current barriers to affective access to Massage as a therapeutic and preventative intervention need to be eliminated through improved accessibility; overcoming the fear of touch, meeting the costs of treatment for the vulnerable and ill, increasing professional standards and improving the quality and content of educational provision.

We are currently limited and even damaged by the 'duties of care' that inhibit teachers, social workers and foster carers from comforting a child.

*"Results indicated foot Massage had the potential effect of increasing relaxation as evidenced by physiological changes during the brief intervention administered to critically ill patients in intensive care."*⁴

It seems as though we are regulating against human nature. Care homes and hospitals are struggling to care sufficiently for the elderly due to regulations and processes that take time away from the patient. Busy working parents have less time to be tactile with their children.

*"Hospital admissions for stress have risen by 7% in just twelve months."*⁵

Giving nurturing touch to the young whilst teaching them to say yes or no, empowers them to assert themselves to reject unwanted touch, reduce the opportunity for abuse and teenage pregnancies.

Society is displaying unrest through delinquency, isolation, violence, loneliness, stress, illness, mental illness and abuse of others.

By more readily accepting touch we can build a more tactile, loving, respectful and stable society.

*"Good evidence from randomized controlled trials indicates that Massage reduces anxiety scores in the short term in settings as varied as intensive care, psychiatric institutions, hospices, and occupational health."*⁶

The majority of Massage therapists are self employed and are a dedicated group of people who make a huge difference through their work, both paid and voluntary. The growth of this Massage industry would contribute greatly to the society and the economy.

*"Every day back pain costs UK Economy £37,000,000 that's £19 Billion a year"*⁷



PRO-TOUCH MANIFESTO KEY POINTS:

1 Make Massage and other touch therapies more accessible in a balanced health care system via the National Health Service and Private Medical Health Insurance.

- 🌿 Educate primary health care givers in the benefits of touch as an appropriate language of care within their work.
- 🌿 Ensure Massage is provided for conditions where GP's have identified gaps in effectiveness. (Arthritis, back pain and other musculoskeletal disorders, stress, anxiety and depression, cancer, heart conditions, stroke, irritable bowel syndrome, skin conditions and insomnia).
- 🌿 Develop a prescription program whereby GP's consider and prescribe Massage for their patients where indicated.

2 Raise the professional status of the Massage industry and increase the recognition for the way the industry is contributing to and supporting society.

- 🌿 Improve the business skills and acumen of Massage therapists by offering business training.
- 🌿 Equip our youths to have the skills and qualifications to join the Massage industry and to run their own businesses, working with the Further Education Sector.

3 Build a statistical awareness of the economic and therapeutic value that Massage has in society and organise a campaign to educate society to demonstrate how Massage and touch are not a luxury.

- 🌿 Conduct research to measure savings in medical costs - from the common use of Massage/positive touch in neonatal units, where increased weight gain leads to infants leaving hospital up to 5 days early, cancer hospitals and hospices and including the treatment of depression, anxiety, insomnia, back pain and musculoskeletal disorders.
- 🌿 Celebrate such hospitals, hospices and care centres and those therapists who provide treatments as a volunteer.
- 🌿 Create case studies on how Massage can help relieve or prevent stress related diseases and disorders.
- 🌿 Measure the contribution Massage could make towards the UK's economic recovery.
- 🌿 Educate the public and the medical profession to realise the preventative nature of Massage.
- 🌿 Build a directory and celebrate companies who provide access to Massage as part of their employee welfare program, whilst encouraging others to do the same.
- 🌿 Track the number of hours therapists provide Massage on a voluntary basis and provide awards to those offering the most.

"Demonstrating the effectiveness of Massage therapy for chronic low back pain. Researchers found that "patients receiving Massage were twice as likely as those receiving usual care to report significant improvements in both their pain and function" ⁸

"At the end of the 10-week treatment, nearly 40 percent of patients in the Massage groups said their pain was nearly or completely gone, compared to 4 percent in the usual care group, which included treatments such as taking pain medications or muscle relaxants, seeing doctors or physical therapists, or not doing anything." ⁹

In England 10,000 babies born prematurely are admitted to NHS neonatal units each year. The national average daily unit cost for special care in neonatal units is £772. Randomised trials have provided evidence that massage in premature infants is associated with objective outcomes such as more rapid weight gain and development allowing babies to be discharged up to 5 days early. This could represent a saving of up to £38,600,000. ¹⁰



4 Reduce the limitations and damage caused by 'duties of care' that prevent instinctive and natural touch in our institutions and by service providers.

- 💧 Raise awareness that there is no "no touch policy" in schools.
- 💧 Promote training programs that teach positive touch as a natural interaction between children.
- 💧 Teach care givers such as nurses, neo natal nurses and carers in homes simple Massage skills that impart a sense of wellbeing, respect and being nurtured by the receiver.
- 💧 Ensure carers also receive Massage and positive touch.
- 💧 Train foster carers and adoptive parents safer caring skills that incorporate safe use of touch.

5 Reduce and prevent inappropriate touch through empowering the receiver to say no.

- 💧 Actively promote training programs that ensure there is a clear distinction between caring, loving touch and inappropriate touch, so our children are safely and appropriately cared for and nurtured.
- 💧 Teach young babies to say no to touch when they do not want it.
- 💧 Reduce unwanted touch, abuse and teenage pregnancies.

"Massage reduces physical and emotional stress, and reduces pain and insomnia among primary caregivers for terminally ill family members, according to a study, "Massage as a respite intervention for primary caregivers." ¹¹

"A child goes into care and needs a foster family every 22 minutes across the UK." ¹²

"At least one in four people in England are thought to have used complementary or alternative therapy in the past year. In recent surveys, 85 per cent of medical students, 76 per cent of GP's and 69 per cent of hospital doctors have said they feel that complementary therapies should be made available on the NHS." ¹³

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