



## Self-Massage in the comfort of your home

With Fran Doidge

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Self-massage is very calming, good for your muscles and can be a wonderful way of getting in touch with where your body is holding tension. As you tune into your body you are able to soothe tight muscles and listen to any emotions which you are holding within your muscles; which you otherwise may not realise are there. You will instinctively know how deeply or gently you need to massage each part of your body.

*First, make yourself comfortable in a warm room.* Take off relevant clothing and sit on a towel on the floor, or on a chair, if you prefer. Shake the bottle of your massage oil well before you start. If you have an Aromatherapy blend pour a 10p coin sized pool into your hands, warm the oil between your hands and bring your hands up to your nose so that you can inhale the wonderful aroma before you begin.

*Shoulders, arms and hands.* Tip out a 50p coin pool of oil into your hands and warm it up between your palms. Now smooth it over your entire left neck and shoulder using your right hand. Bring the oil down onto your left arm and hand too. Still using your right hand squeeze the muscles on the left side of your neck and shoulder to warm them up. Use your fingertips in a circular motion to work more deeply into any areas that feel particularly tight; especially feel into your elbow for tender spots. Knead the muscle of the top of your shoulder, upper and lower left arm, using the fingers and heel of your right hand. Circle and stroke down the arm, from shoulder to hand a couple of times, then use the thumb of your right hand to massage the palm and back of your left hand, finishing by stroking and stretching each finger in turn, finishing with the thumb. Repeat on your right shoulder, neck arm and hand.

*Back (you may find lying on one side then the other more relaxing).* You can use the heel of your hands, or even your fists/knuckles to work into the big muscles of your lower back. Long deep strokes (avoid the spine) and deep circles are both good here. Bring the strokes down onto your buttocks too.

### *Massage tips for hips*

Underneath the large gluteal muscle there is a smaller muscle called the piriformis which holds the hip bone in place. This is attached to the sacro-ileac joint and lies in a diagonal line across the buttocks. This is often the culprit for sciatica as it traps the sciatic nerve. Also when it is tight it pulls on the sacro-ileac joint and thus on the lower back causing the characteristic and common lower back pain. Our aim is to relieve the tension in the piriformis as well as the gluteals.

### *Piriformis pummel*

Lie on your side with the leg beneath you straight and the upper leg bent; like the recovery position

Apply massage oil

Using your knuckles rub firmly any painful/tight area; adding to the motion by moving your buttocks against the knuckles. Remember the sacro-ileac joint where you can focus your massage.

Check the area next to the hip bone as there is a ligament here which is often tight and which you may miss. The pain can often be quite intense; in which case just rest between each rub as much as you need to; you will find that it eases when you let it rest.

You may find that there is also tension further on down the thigh so continue in this direction as far as is comfortable

Rest before you turn over to repeat on the other side

Rest at the end and allow the massage to be processed by the body

### *Gluteal wobble*

To get some more movement into the gluteal muscles lie on your back

Make a fist with your hand

Place the fist under your gluteal muscle and move your buttock area over the fist

In this way you are using the weight of your body and gravity to create a positive tool out of the fist

Finish by using general massage over the whole buttock area to settle and release

Repeat on the other side

Rest and allow to release.

*Tummy.* We hold a surprising amount of tension in our tummy as a lot of our emotions are, surprisingly, generated from this area. Gently massaging your tummy is a wonderful way of connecting with yourself. Pour out a 50p pool of oil. Take your time using gentle, smooth strokes with a circular clockwise movement. Focus on your out breath to help you to relax. Close your eyes and focus all your attention on your feelings here. Take a few moments to use the heel of the hand and work in a clockwise direction over the upper chest and focus on the out breath letting go of tension here near your heart.

*Legs and feet.* (This may be easier lying on one side then the other in the recovery position with your upper leg bent) Pour out a 50p pool of oil and apply to the upper leg spreading the oil over the thighs and then downwards with long gentle strokes down to your ankle and back up to your knee. Squeeze the muscles in your thighs. Use your fist and thumb knuckle in a circular motion over all of your thighs; both inner and outer. Focus on your knees and the tendons above, below, inside and outside. These can be tender. Spend some time using your fingers and thumb to work on these areas. Calves can be tight at the back and your thumbs are good tools to circle this area. Anchor with your fingers on the front of your calf.

Pour out a 10p pool of oil and apply to your feet. Then use your thumbs to massage all over your foot: sole, upper foot and all the toes. It sometimes helps to get there easier by putting your foot up onto a chair or with the leg bent. If a particular area feels good, spend longer on it.

Finish by stroking oil all the way up both legs, from toes to hips. Make these strokes gentle, long and slow.

*Head and face.* Apply 10p of oil to face and neck. Using your fingertips, massage your forehead, cheeks, chin and jaw line - with small outward circles. We often hold tension in our jaw; holding in things we want to say but cannot and it helps to open and close the mouth as you massage. Then squeeze your neck, using the flats of your hands and your thumbs finding the tight areas. Use alternating sweeping movements from jaw line to chest. There will now be very little oil left on your hands, so this is a great time to massage the whole of your scalp. Use your fingertips and work deeply to stimulate circulation here. Finish by squeezing and stretching your ears between thumbs and fingertips.

Finally, put the top back on the oil bottle, wrap yourself in a warm towel and rest.

Ideally go to bed and sleep.