

Visualization, Affirmations and Prayer

by Todd Fiorentino

Doing a massage is not totally unlike an exorcism. You are trying to help the person to get rid of their “demons,” which have built-up in the very tissues of their body. It is remarkable that how you think, your attitude and life experiences could become so enmeshed in your physical form, but that is how it works. The energetic aspects of massage; the practitioner’s focus and intention; your wish for the client and the client’s wish for him/herself, all become incredibly important during a session.

As a practitioner, your love for the world and your ability to be open to other people will affect the outcome. My wish for the client is not that they come back to me and become a regular client, although that’s always nice, rather, it is for them to get better. And it should be said, there are many ways to get better. My teacher in massage school, Luther Lockhart, used to refer to the “different doors” that you can go through. Some will meditate, try different modalities, or do yoga or tai ji; some will visualize, affirm and pray.

My own personal belief is that affirmations can be very beneficial in the healing process. Since your mind is controlling your whole body, sending signals down each nerve pathway down the spine and out, it seems realistic that your thoughts might tamper with those signals. Too much energy or too little may be sent to an area. Massage helps to equalize that imbalance. Here are a couple of affirmations to try before or during massage: “There is nothing that I need to do.” “There is nothing wrong with me.”

While a rationalist may easily dismiss this, I offer to you that many irrational things work anyway. An example: PBS did a show about the evils of stress where the film crew traveled to Tibet and hooked-up monks to scientific instruments to gauge their body temperature. During meditation they found the monks could increase their body temperature, at will, an average of ten degrees. This is a remarkable finding and a real statement in regard to mind power.

You might also try visualization during your next massage. Actually envision the muscle fibers clicking, expanding, unraveling and releasing as they are being worked. Imagine the cells bursting and trigger points melting. It is especially good to breathe deeply (about 4 seconds to inhale and 6 seconds to exhale) during trigger point work. But don’t worry too much about whether you’re doing it right. If you just blank out and enjoy the massage that has its benefits too.

Consider this, in meditation, one of the first exercises is not to clear your mind, but to sit back and watch your mind, watch the thoughts race by like horses. This process of stepping back increases your focus and self-awareness, giving you the opportunity to decide what deserves a response and what should be left alone. Meditation reminds us that we live in a world of almost constant sensory stimulation, either visual or auditory.

When I say prayer, what I really mean is hope. Be hopeful. What you throw out into the universe does boomerang. The level of effort that you put into something is equal to what is returned. This is not an easy one to accept because most of us feel like we’ve been cheated by people or events that are out of our control. Take back that control. One way to not go through life being a victim is to pray, think, hope, dream and realize that what’s upsetting you now will be meaningless in 10, 5, maybe even 1 year.

Nothing has power over you unless you let it. Realize that one day your physical life will be over and all you will be left with is your deeds. What was your life work? How did

you leave the world? What did you trade to get where you are today? Sometimes being mad at ourselves makes us treat people badly. I recently saw the movie “Cold Mountain” and thought: One of the most powerful things about this movie is the enduring kindness of strangers. To be able to help and expect nothing in return, that is a prayer I have for myself. Do you have prayers?