



Massage Your Balancing Act

By David Kent, LMT, NCTMB

Keeping It Simple Series



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In my May column, I talked about how to empower your clients using simple communication skills. It doesn't matter whether you work in a clinic, a spa, or as an outcall massage therapist; chances are, you have encountered one or more clients who experience feelings of hopelessness and depression because of their physical pain. Keeping an open dialogue and educating your clients about their bodies, as well as maintaining a positive attitude in the treatment room, is as essential to a client's well-being as the bodywork itself. Sometimes, however, this is easier said than done—especially when you are in the midst of your own challenges.

As massage therapists, we are often so focused on helping our clients that we neglect our own professional, financial, personal and spiritual lives. So how does one go about creating balance in all of these areas? In this article, I will walk you through five steps that can help you balance and produce positive changes in any area of your life.

If you've listened to the news in the last couple of months, chances are you've heard the buzz about the economy. Prices for basic goods, services and gas continue to rise, and many of the

And it's not healthy to expend large amounts of energy over the things that we can't control. Rather, what we need to do is to focus our efforts on those things in our immediate lives that we can control; then evaluate the challenges and take steps to overcome them.

"It's easier to deal with the stresses of life when you are flexible."

experts are predicting some tough times ahead. Obviously, some things—like the economy—are outside of our control.

In addition to running a massage practice, we all perform various juggling acts. I am on the road several weeks a year teaching seminars, as well as running a clinic and continually working to develop new and improve existing products. This doesn't take into account trying to maintain a social life and my relationships with friends and family. Perhaps you are dealing with similar issues: running a massage practice, trying to devote more time to yourself and your family, and a host of other personal and professional obligations. So, here is rule number one: It's easier to deal with the stresses of life when you are flexible. There is no doubt that



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challenges will be constantly thrown your way. Maintaining flexibility and a willingness to adjust your plans will make dealing with these challenges much easier. You can start with the following five steps.

FIVE STEPS TO CHANGE

1. ACKNOWLEDGE THAT SOMETHING IS OUT OF BALANCE AND NEEDS YOUR ATTENTION

No one ever improved a situation by looking the other way. No matter how painful, scary or unpleasant the circumstances, it is generally best to face it squarely.

PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES

Are you worried about increasing volume or just maintaining your massage practice in this unsettling economy? Try one or more of the following:

- Visit businesses, gyms, and other health care professionals in your area to establish new referral sources.
- Offer discounts and incentives for regular and repeat clients.
- Educate your clients so that they will continue therapy and refer friends, coworkers and family.
- Learn new treatment techniques so that you can specialize in a particular area of bodywork.
- Sell products to generate extra income.
- Check out my article, "Building Raving Fans," in the April issue of *Massage Today* for a host of additional practice-building tips.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Are you making a decent living or barely making enough money to get by? Hire a financial planner who specializes in small business money management. A financial planner can help you create a reasonable budget that you can stick to; help you plan for retirement and unexpected financial emergencies; and help you get organized so that you can see the bigger financial picture down the line. Can't afford to pay a financial planner? Consider trading services with one. Or check out your local bookstore—there are plenty of great books that

specialize in financial planning and small businesses.

PERSONAL & SPIRITUAL CHALLENGES

You won't be much good to your clients unless you are taking care of your mental and physical health. Exercise, eat healthier, and take time out to recharge your brain and do the things you enjoy.

2. ASK EMPOWERING QUESTIONS THAT INCLUDE A SPECIFIC POSITIVE OUTCOME

Ask yourself what you can do right now to immediately improve your situation.

PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES

Empowering questions would include:

- Are there mentors or other professionals that I can turn to for advice?
- Are there sources of information online or elsewhere where you I can learn more about how to handle this problem?
- Should I take some educational seminars?

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Empowering questions would include:

- Do I have a working accounting system?
- Do I understand the finances of my business? If not, you may need specialized computer software or other practice-management options, such as customized business forms.
- Should I take a financial class or tutorial?
- Should I update my business tools? Perhaps you own charts and tools, but they are outdated. For the price of one or two treatments, you could pay for updated materials that increase your volume. That's an investment in your business (and a tax write-off).

PERSONAL & SPIRITUAL CHALLENGES

Empowering questions would include:

- What do I need to do to stay personally and spiritually balanced?
- What physical activities do I enjoy doing that work with my schedule?
- What can I do for myself that has a positive influence on all the areas of my life?

3. IMPLEMENT CHANGE BY TAKING ACTION

The empowering questions you asked in step two will help determine the actions you need to take. There is a saying that goes, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step." The key is to start and then constantly move in the direction of the outcome. Don't get frustrated if things don't happen right away. Most things take time to come to fruition—and patience is a virtue.

4. ASSESS AND MODIFY YOUR PLAN TO ACHIEVE YOUR OUTCOME

This is where flexibility comes into play. Always prepare for unexpected challenges and try not to get overwhelmed when things don't go exactly right. Instead, ask yourself, "What did I learn today?" When you hit a wall, start at step one above, and repeat the cycle. Realize that there will be occasional bumps in the road. For more about achieving your desired outcomes, check out my article, "The Power of the List," in the January 2007 issue of *Massage Today*.

5. MAINTAIN A POSITIVE OUTLOOK

It is important to see the silver lining with everything we do. Most people will never completely understand the challenges we face as massages therapists, but you chose this profession because you wanted to help people. No matter what challenges you are facing, there is always a light at the end of the tunnel. Stay positive. Take the lemons in your very capable hands, and make lemonade.

Join me next month for more valuable information, until then stay focused, be positive and enjoy the process.

David Kent, LMT, NCTMB, is a writer, educator and international lecturer specializing in dissection, medical massage and practice building seminars. David, founder and president of Kent Health Systems, is a product innovator and has developed the Postural Analysis Grid Chart, Trigger Point and Muscle Movement Charts, Personalized Essential Office Forms and DVD Programs. His clinic, Muscular Pain Relief Center employs numerous therapists and receives referrals from area hospitals and various medical specialists.



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