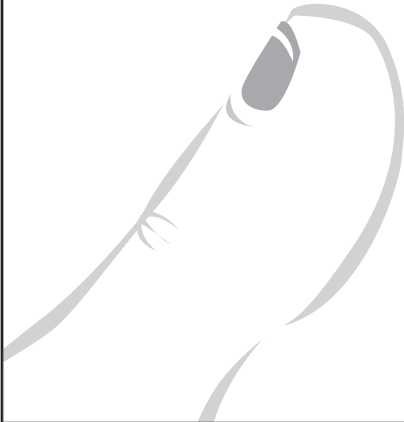


touch

Touch. Recently, I was beyond ecstatic when my family gave me what I consider to be the perfect gift. No, not even theater tickets or expensive perfume. They gave me a gift certificate for a one-hour massage by a professional masseuse. The anticipation alone made me relax.

As a physical therapist, I have a deep appreciation for the benefits of touch and massage. I am comfortable with it—as a giver or recipient. I find it sad that so many people rule out the idea of having a massage. They say they would be uncomfortable with a stranger touching them or they argue that it's just an expensive luxury. Some of my more honest friends admit that they would feel embarrassed because they think that they're fat. I remind them that Sven, the gorgeous Swedish masseur, couldn't care less about their cellulite. He is there only for their well-being and pleasure. Could anything be more divine?

Touch is a natural healing tool. We need to be touched! Babies who are not touched develop a condition called "failure to thrive." They are underweight and have below-average IQs. However, studies show that when these babies are rocked and touched early in life, they can gain weight and show significant cognitive improvement.



I don't think we ever outgrow the need to be touched.

A good massage slows our heart rate, breathing, and blood pressure. It reduces mental and physical tension and rids us of those little aches and pains. It also provides a time of quiet rejuvenation. However, if a massage just doesn't fit into your budget, all is not lost! Simple acts of touching like handholding and hugs are beneficial, too. And they're free! If you're alone, why not reach for a soft sweater or go let the grass tickle your bare feet. The joys of touch are amazingly powerful and they are all around you!

So, thanks, Family, for not buying me a food processor or a Dustbuster. You've given me something so much better—and I'm touched.

