



# REFLEXOLOGY: A NEW FACE TO AN ANCIENT ART

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*Ms. Stone is an internationally certified reflexologist, a certified master reflexologist, and a nationally published author. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch and E-Pregnancy spotlighted her work in reflexology. Ms. Stone's article, **Massage for Active Seniors**, is the AMTA Massage Therapy Journal cover story for Winter 2004.*

A martial art student asked a revered teacher, "Teach me, Master, the secret of your Art." The Master smiled gently and leaning forward whispered, "Practice." This little story presents a truth I share with clients and students regarding the ancient lineage of reflexology – practice correct technique perfectly until finely honed skill becomes instinctive, and maximum results are within hands reach.

Reflexology is the modern American name and system for an ancient healing method. Earliest records date the practice to 4,500 years ago with variations practiced in India, Egypt, Tibet, China, Japan and elsewhere. As people traveled and migrated, reflex therapy spread to Europe and, from there, to the United States at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Reflexology is a unique form of bodywork that is separate

and distinct from massage or foot massage. The primary object of American and Asian reflex therapy is to apply specific techniques to identifiable reflexes in order to encourage the body to balance and normalize for better health. As such, legitimate reflexologists do not diagnose, prescribe, treat, nor cure a specific condition.

Tenderness in the feet (or hands) indicates congestion or deposits (in the form of tissue, fluid, etc.) that impedes the flow of blood and nerve supply, as well as bio-electrical energy. Schooled reflexologists work to reduce or eliminate congestion, helping the body restore balance and health.

In my practice, clients are encouraged to follow up a session with a foot soak or bath, and intake adequate water for the best results. Specific stretches and self-care routines enhance benefits. High pollution and the stress of contemporary life has made it mandatory for

conscientious persons to adopt a holistic lifestyle. Diet, exercise, nutritional support, spiritual practice and balanced living are keys to optimizing results to any bodywork practice, including reflexology.



*"Working the chest reflex is essential to reduce the effects of pollution, stress, and shoulder tension," says Paula Stone, certified reflexologist and reflexology instructor.*

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Reflexology is highly adaptable. It can be practiced alone or with other therapies. In my practice, clients may elect a reflexology-only session. All massage sessions include reflexology. The deep levels of relaxation quickly achievable with reflexology soften the sense of perpetual urgency brought about by high levels of sustained stress. Deeper states of relaxation re-establish balance among the body, emotions, mind and spirit, leading to healing.

Many reflexology sessions often involve advanced techniques. Therapeutic sessions often employ intricate tissue work, acupressure, and other techniques to ease the discomfort of scar tissue, impaired mobility, turf toe, plantar fasciitis, heel spurs, diabetes and just plain tired feet. The results are deeply rewarding.

Julie Schwartz, a physical therapy assistant and massage therapist who understands the benefits of massage, elects to have reflexology on a regular basis. "I'm on my feet all day," says Julie. "With reflexology, I have less pain from an old foot injury. I also relax deeply, feel better and have more energy." As a result of her experiences, Julie is now working toward certification in reflexology at The Stone Institute LLC based in St. Charles.\*

Massage clients also benefit from reflexology. Leslie Hickman has received massage for more than a decade. "Reflexology with massage helps to achieve more complete relaxation and prolongs the effects of massage," says Hickman, a national instructor and mixed medium artist.

For seniors and diabetics, reflexology improves circulation and mobility. Jeanette, a client who travels an hour for sessions, is quick to point out with a smile, "Reflexology has given me back my feet."

The electronic age makes it easy to learn about reflexology. Lay persons and healthcare professionals can learn simple techniques to reduce stress and enhance overall well being.

Those, like Julie, who are interested in advancing their training, knowledge, and achieving measurable skill, enroll in programs to become certified. Hands on instruction from an instructor and continuing education are required for all certified reflexologists.

National certification programs require a minimum of 200 hours of training and a written and practical exam for certification.



*"Proper technique and a thorough knowledge of physiology is essential to yield consistent therapeutic outcomes," says Paula Stone, nationally published author on reflexology.*

