

## Will I Have To Strip Off?

Times have changed so much in the massage training world and at the same time students needs remain the same; to feel safe and respected during any of the massage courses that they choose to take part in. I do take it for granted though and I don't always make explicit that I honour that need. This is my 2<sup>nd</sup> decade in massage training and I've worked with countless groups and hundreds of individuals. Over the years I've been involved in writing many words to describe to people what massage is and isn't and I attempt to give potential students a clear picture of what they are undertaking when choosing a massage training with SCMT. Despite my intention, occasionally I forget helpful information and I was reminded of this on the most recent introductory weekend. Joan (not her real name) contacted me because she was thinking about doing the weekend. She'd received details of the 2-day course but she couldn't find anything written about me. After talking with me and gaining enough information to feel I'd be a suitable teacher for her training needs, she signed up for the course. I have to admit that I'd omitted details about me from the brochure thinking people would be more interested in the course content. After the conversation with Joan however, I have added a short profile about myself to the A5 leaflet, so that people like Joan have an idea of where I'm coming from.

Joan attended the weekend. She appeared nervous, but willing to participate along with the other students. It's inevitable that we will feel nervous at the start of a new course. The first day of a beginners weekend incorporates an introduction; what to expect from the course, and commences with self-massage. Self-

massage can be used as a de-stressor anytime and can also be used to prepare the person massaging to give a focussed, relaxed massage. I then go on to demonstrate a simple hand massage and ask participants to practice this on each other in pairs. Later in the day I demonstrate a head, neck and face massage. Here I give students the option of removing their clothes (to protect from oil stains) when they practice on each other.

Throughout the weekend people are encouraged to handle each other in a respectful, caring manner, to give feedback to each other and attempt to remain mindful during the giving and receiving, rather than drifting off into past or future events. This makes massage rather like meditation and enhances the benefits for giver and receiver. At the end of the first day, the group had had an enjoyable time and were filled with enthusiasm and lots of questions. As we were leaving Joan came up to me and said she'd had a great day, however, she would have felt much more relaxed at the start, if I'd told everyone they weren't expected to strip off! It had been a concern of hers that she might feel exposed but hadn't felt able to mention it. I'm someone who's intention, as a training provider, is to create a safe place for women and men to learn this delicate and wonderful art. In the past I have found myself saying similar e.g. "only take off what you feel happy with". I felt sorry that I hadn't said anything like that this particular day and that Joan had worried about what was going to happen.

So dear reader if you are thinking about an introductory massage weekend with SCMT here's what you can expect to happen: We build in massage demonstrations on areas of the body such as hands, head and face and the student can remain clothed throughout the first day. On the second day the group feels safe together and camaraderie and support are established. As we explore back anatomy & massage on this day, when the time comes to receive your massage, you may have your back uncovered. For anyone wishing to undress, it isn't expected that

you do so in front of everybody; you can have privacy and then pop a towel around you. So **no**, you don't have to strip off!

*I began by stating that massage training has changed, that change for me has come about by feedback I have received over the years that has transformed my courses. And it still remains, that students on a course should have their learning needs and concerns taken into account. If you wish to do training with SCMT please feel free to discuss your needs.*

*Vicky Gaughan (Principal SCMT)*