

# The Massage Educator

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## 53,372

The number of graduates from massage programs in 2008, down from 71,274 in 2004, according to ABMP's school enrollment surveys.

Created by Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals • [philosophy for instructors](#)



## THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

### STUDENT TO STUDENT

Giving and receiving constructive feedback is essential to learning massage and to professional development. Self-awareness, boundary setting, basic communication skills, and massage techniques improve when students move beyond comments that are vague, evasive, personal, or judgmental and into providing feedback that is specific enough to promote positive change. As instructors, we can help students give useful feedback by providing good guidelines and by making time to focus on feedback when students exchange massages with each other.

**PROVIDE GOOD GUIDELINES**  
Education writers describe constructive feedback as information-specific, issue-focused, and based on observation.

When we teach students to give feedback, we might provide the basic guidelines described here. Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP) has created a student handout titled "Guidelines for Giving and Receiving Feedback in Massage Therapy Classrooms" for your use. It discusses each of these guidelines in depth, provides examples of good and bad feedback, and suggests ways to accept and utilize feedback to improve skills. Download a copy in the "Resources for Massage Schools and Instructors" section of [ABMP.com](#). These examples can help get you started.

**1. Check in.** Ask yourself, "Am I ready to give feedback based on my observations with specific suggestions for changes? Do I have any motivations for giving feedback other than to help my classmate improve?"

**2. Comment right away.** Give feedback as soon as you notice a behavior that needs modification. If a stroke feels too light or too deep, alert your therapist during the stroke.

## response cards

Response cards are color-coded pairs of preprinted cards instructors distribute to query students' opinions regarding a variety of topics or to check student comprehension. Response pairs are Yes/No, True/False, and Agree/Disagree.

Present a scenario and ask students if the therapist behaved in an ethical manner. Students then hold up the Agree or Disagree card, leading to lots of useful discussion. Make a statement about a pathology condition and ask students to respond with the True/False cards. Response cards ensure that everyone participates without singling out students.



UNDERSTAND  
GENERATIONAL  
DIFFERENCES

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## 5 GREAT TEACHER RESOURCES

At Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP), we have been working hard to develop a rich library of resources to support massage school instructors. Visit [www.abmp.com](http://www.abmp.com) and click on the “Massage School Instructors” link in the “Resources for Massage Schools and Instructors” section to access information about these top five resources—and much more.

**1. Instructors on the Front Lines workshops.** These complimentary seminars for instructors provide new tools for classroom management. Check out upcoming events and register for a session near you.

**2. Webinars.** Webinars are Web-based seminars that allow people to learn about a topic from the convenience of their own computer. ABMP holds regularly scheduled webinars for instructors on issues related to building educational capacity and student success. If you don’t currently receive e-mail invitations to ABMP webinars and would like to participate, sign up here for invitations or view past webinars.

**3. *Teaching Massage* textbook.** ABMP is proud to share with you the publication of a new textbook called *Teaching Massage: Fundamental Principles in Adult Education for Massage Program Instructors*. This joint effort between ABMP and Lippincott Williams & Wilkins utilizes the experience and insight of 17 leaders in the massage profession to support massage instructors and schools in their efforts to create meaningful learning environments.

**4. Instructor self-evaluation.** Develop a personal plan for goal setting and regular self-evaluation by reading “Evaluate Your Teaching” from the fall 2007 issue of *The Massage Educator* and by using the Instructor Growth Self-Evaluation Form. Both can be accessed in the instructor resources section.

**5. Curriculum resources.** Curriculum resources, including trends in the profession, a lesson planning guide, in-depth information about writing learning objectives, and methods to develop emotional intelligence skills in students, are just some of the helpful topics you’ll find in this section. 🍏

“THE MEDIOCRE TEACHER TELLS.  
THE GOOD TEACHER EXPLAINS.  
THE SUPERIOR TEACHER DEMONSTRATES.  
THE GREAT TEACHER INSPIRES.”  
—WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD

### Teach the Generations

Today’s massage classrooms are comprised of students from three generations—baby boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y—with distinct attitudes, behaviors, expectations, habits, and motivations. By understanding generational differences, we can plan classroom activities that meet the needs of all adult learners.

#### BABY BOOMERS

In their 1991 book *Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584 to 2069*, William Strauss and Neil Howe define a generation as a group possessing certain characteristics, values, and beliefs influenced by the events that define their lifetimes. While you may see some students from the Silent Generation (1925–1942), it is most likely that your oldest students are Baby Boomers (1943–1960).

Baby boomers grew up in a time of American affluence and prosperity and have the highest rates of participation in college. The sheer force of their numbers (76 million Americans) remodeled society. Because boomers lived during great social change, they hold a strong belief in the ability to determine personal and national destiny. These life-long learners, workaholics, and cause crusaders enjoy working in teams and feeling valued and needed. They are sensitive to criticism and resent excessive feedback. They need plenty of time to practice new skills before they are formally evaluated. They resist educational games or activities,



**3. Say it again.** Sometimes the behavior improves temporarily, yet the unwanted behavior may reappear. Give feedback repeatedly to ensure your therapist makes the necessary change.

**4. Specify.** Be direct when describing what you observed or felt; you don’t need to praise or criticize. For example, “When you undraped my leg, it felt like you were holding the sheet up at an angle that might expose me. Can you hold it lower so I don’t feel a draft?”

**5. Focus on impact and change.** Explain the impact of the behavior on your experience and suggest specific changes that would improve it. “It feels like you are cutting the stroke short on my thigh. What if you took the stroke all the way up and around my greater trochanter instead? Yes! That’s it! That feels so much better!”

**6. Respond to change.** When the therapist changes his or her stroke or adjusts the behavior based on your feedback, respond with reinforcing statements like, “Yes, that feels better” or “You’re on the right track, but slow down just a little bit more. Yes, that’s perfect!”

**7. Find balance.** Give balanced overall feedback on massage exchanges by providing information both on what worked and on what didn’t work.

**8. Be specific.** Remember that general or vague feedback is not helpful. If you say, “That was great” it is as useless as saying, “That was terrible.”

**9. Be considerate.** Give feedback privately and don’t share with other students the feedback you provided to a classmate.

**10. Get feedback on your feedback.** When you give feedback, inquire about its value by asking something like, “Was my feedback useful?” Through this type of open communication, you build trust and improve your skills.

#### MAKE TIME FOR FEEDBACK

Make time in class to teach students how to give and receive constructive feedback and then create a structure for giving feedback during exchanges. For example, stop massage exchanges at predetermined points and direct students to give feedback on specific skills. It is also important to teach students who are acting as clients to focus on giving feedback. Don’t allow them to zone out when they receive massage. Expect them to give constructive feedback throughout the session.

Goal setting before a massage exchange can also be useful. Ask students to identify one thing they want to improve based on feedback gained during previous massages. You might also give a point value to feedback. Ask students acting as clients to write down their feedback to other students; have them turn it in to you. Give students feedback on the quality of their feedback and give extra credit points for high-quality feedback. Finally, set an example of how to give, ask for, and receive feedback by asking students to provide input on the value of classroom activities on a regular basis. 🍏



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TEACH THE GENERATIONS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

like role-playing and drama-based scenarios, but respect strong leaders, even while they question authority.

### GENERATION X

Adult learners from Generation X were born between 1961 and 1980 and share a tendency to be ironic, cynical, and reactive. The first group of children to grow up in two-income families with women in the workplace, Xers adapt well to change. They are independent, resourceful, and self-sufficient; tolerant of alternative attitudes; and they understand that all people have different ways of learning and relating to one another. They are technologically adept, but not overly-dependant on staying connected through e-mail or text messaging. This group is task-oriented and seeks to attain several goals at one time. They struggle to balance school, work, and family life, while needing regular feedback and positive reinforcement. Xers respond well to structure so long as they are given the message, “This is a suggestion—go ahead and do it differently if you have a better plan.”

### GENERATION Y

The youngest, and potentially the most challenging students, come from Generation Y (1981–2000). This group could comprise two-thirds of your current student population and their numbers are growing. Gen Ys were nurtured and pampered by their parents and, as a result, have difficulty sharing and compromising. The first truly

“hardwired” generation, Ys grew up online and depend on their technological savvy to feel connected through e-mail, social networking, and text messaging. Ys tend to have poor direct communication skills, but their social group is important. They feel comfortable challenging others and easily enter a pack mentality if one of their group seems threatened by an authority figure. Ys need multiple stimuli to remain engaged; they respond well to information delivered in small, bite-sized chunks. They work effectively in structured groups with defined roles, goals, and outcomes. This group craves attention, even when it is negative, and will seek to negotiate everything with instructors. It is important for instructors to establish and maintain clear boundaries with Ys.

### BEST PRACTICES

So what are the best recommendations from experts about teaching diverse generational groups? Teach adult learners about their generational tendencies and acknowledge generational learning differences. Pair boomers with Ys in learning groups and ensure that all activities are well structured with defined tasks and goals. Use examples that all generations can relate to and recognize that you will teach in a style that best fits your own generation. ABMP webinars on a variety of topics, especially “Building Emotional Intelligence Skills in Students,” provide practical tips. Log on to [www.abmp.com](http://www.abmp.com) and follow the links in the “Resources for Massage Schools and Instructors” section. 🍏