

ten for today

BY CHRISTINE SPEHAR

MAKING YOUR MASSAGE PRACTICE EARTH FRIENDLY



Massage therapists are experts when it comes to healing the body, and it just so happens that helping the environment goes hand in hand with basic massage principles—healthy, happy people help keep the planet healthy and happy. Following are 10 ways to clean up your practice.

1. CREATE AMBIANCE

How many massage therapists does it take to screw in a light bulb? Only you can answer that for your practice, but make sure you use compact florescent lights (CFLs) instead of conventional light bulbs. They last up to 10 times longer and use 75 percent less energy. Beware of the fact that CFLs contain mercury and call for extra care if they are broken. Visit www.energystar.gov/cfls to learn more about proper disposal of expired bulbs.

2. CONSERVE RESOURCES

We all know clean, crisp linens are cornerstones of a successful massage practice. So are the washers and dryers they require. Now you don't have to sacrifice quality while saving a little energy. Unplug appliances when they're not in use; this reduces energy consumption as well as electromagnetic field exposure. Invest in Energy Star appliances that are rated for their low energy use and which typically reduce water and energy consumption by 10 to 50 percent.

3. BE CONSCIOUS OF CHEMICALS

Chemical doesn't necessarily mean clean. According to Las Wengell of Know Your Source, "Problems begin when we use synthetic chemicals that

don't occur in nature, which disrupt the earth's natural processes." He says products made of natural oils work as well as synthetic products, but they have better health and environmental profiles. Wengell recommends Seventh Generation and Meyer brand products, and for situations that require further sanitation, "EPA registered, hydrogen peroxide-based products are available that present a lesser health and environmental risk than chlorinated phenols, quaternary amine chlorides, or other chlorine-based products."

4. PRIORITIZE PURITY

Using cosmetics, lotions, and oils that contain the fewest synthetic ingredients possible is a good way to do your part to respect the planet and your clients' health. Bob Butler, of the HobaCare Jojoba Company, says jojoba wax ester (a derivative of the jojoba plant) is pure in its natural form and requires no additives or preservatives. "Jojoba is the closest thing to human sebum found in nature, so it's nonallergenic, doesn't clog pores, and is a great emollient to use in a massage practice. Furthermore, it's sustainably harvested and never goes rancid."

5. DRESS THE PART

According to the website for the Pesticide Action Network North America, “Conventionally grown cotton uses more insecticides than any other single crop and epitomizes the worst effects of chemically dependent agriculture.” Luckily many companies offer good alternatives. Fianna Sustainable Spa Fashions, for example, makes eco-friendly spa uniforms out of a combination of 55 percent hemp and 45 percent tencel. Tencel is made of recycled wood pulp, while hemp is “the most eco friendly fiber there is. It replenishes minerals in the soil when it grows, requires one third less water than cotton and doesn’t need insecticide, because it naturally deters the growth of bacteria,” says Fianna President Kathy Huston.

6. TURN THE TABLES

The crux of your practice is your massage table, but many are made with endangered hardwoods and polluting plastics. Of course alternatives are available. For instance, the Earthlite Harmony DX massage table is made from sustainably sourced hardwoods

and water-based lacquers and glues. The table’s cushioning does not contain or use chlorofluorocarbons (and is therefore ozone safe).

7. LEARN TO LOVE LOCAL

Looking for some tasty treats to enhance your clients’ experience? Buying locally produced food and drink cuts down on transportation-induced carbon emissions, and local goodies are usually fresher (and therefore more nutritious) than supermarket finds. You’ll also support your town’s economy by purchasing directly from family farmers. Visit www.localharvest.org to get connected.

8. REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

From cradle covers to coffee cups and napkins, trash bins seem to fill up quicker than appointment books. While some disposable items are necessary, try to cut back on those that aren’t. Instead of handing out bottled water, provide a drinking fountain with reusable glasses. You can also stock reusable plates, utensils, and cloth napkins.

9. BUILD BETTER: SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS

Few massage therapists have the financial luxury of remodeling their entire space in a sustainable way, but it’s nice to know the option is there. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System encourages responsible building and development practices. Natural insulation options include cellulose fiber, clay-coated straw, cotton fiber, recycled tires from cars, and even sheep’s wool. Choose paint with a low concentration of volatile organic compounds, emitted as gasses from certain solids or liquids. Insulation paint is a good choice, too, because it helps reduce energy consumption and CO₂ emissions.

10. MARKET YOUR GREEN EFFORTS

“We let our clients know about our eco-friendly practices through pamphlets, brochures, and our website,” says Michael Stusser of Green Spa Network. On Greenspanetwork.org you can find links to other green sites, join a forum about green spa practices, and find tips about greening your practice. Stusser says his most successful marketing piece has been a survey that asked clients to give feedback and suggestions pertaining to his spa’s green practices. **m&b**

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