



Your Guide to

Shiatsu

What it is, what it does, and how it can help you
enjoy life more.



restorative bodywork + movement

Adapted by Gina Loree Bryan, AOBTA®-CP, CPT-RES



"The art of shiatsu, practiced to create a balance of our own energy,
is an innate part of being human.

It employs the use of our hands as an extension of our heart and
as an expression of our compassion."

*~ From "The Book of Shiatsu" by Saul Goodman,
founder of the International School of Shiatsu*

Welcome!

I am happy that you have made the decision to explore shiatsu!

It is a decision that can support you in having greater energy, more dynamic responses and an overall sense of well-being.

FEELING WELL - A WAY OF LIFE

The one thing that all people have in common is the desire to feel well and enjoy life. Sometimes this can be challenging - however, it can be achieved. We may need to include a few new habits in our lifestyle to accomplish this goal. It may require a little bit of education and the awareness of what encourages positive feelings and what detracts from well-being.

CAUSES OF STRESS AND DISCOMFORT

There are many factors that can cause stress and discomfort in our modern lifestyle. The fast pace of life can sometimes distract us from doing things that are good for us. Constant pressure to achieve results and to "keep up", can create an environment that generates physical, emotional and psychological stress. Eating on the run, lack of exercise, and not enough attention to one's essential needs are a few of the results of this way of life

HOW CAN SHIATSU HELP?

Shiatsu has many positive effects on the body, emotions and mind. It balances energy and stimulates the regenerative functions of the body. It relieves tension and energy depleting reactions within the body/mind system. Shiatsu can be an important and integrated aspect of any wellness program.



A FEW SIMPLE CHANGES CAN
MAKE A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE!

What is shiatsu?

Shiatsu (pronounced shee - ah' - tsoo) literally means "finger pressure". It is a blend of traditional bodywork techniques developed in China and Japan. A number of western techniques are also incorporated along with a knowledge of anatomy and physiology.

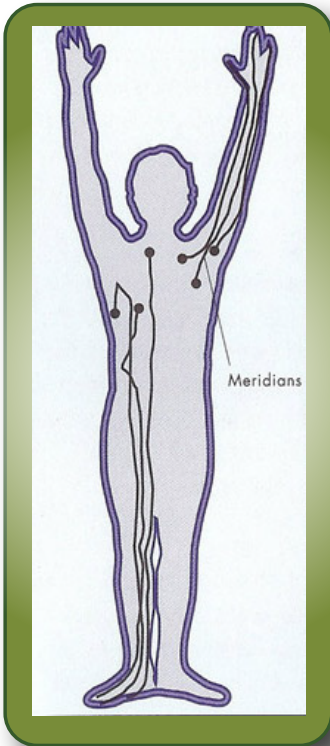


Fig. 1 Meridian Lines

HOW DOES SHIATSU WORK?

Balancing energy.

Thousands of years ago, the Chinese discovered that bioelectric current or "chi", circulates throughout the body along well-defined passageways called "meridians" (fig.1).

As it moves through the body, the chi feeds the organs, muscles and senses and therefore vitalizes all of the body's functions.

If the flow of chi is balanced, then a person feels well physically and emotionally. If the chi becomes overactive or deficient, then conditions and symptoms begin to arise (this knowledge became the basis of acupuncture and traditional Chinese Medicine).

Through various bodywork techniques, the shiatsu practitioner seeks to balance the flow of chi, restoring the client to a state of well-being.

Shiatsu can be effective for a variety of symptoms and conditions.

The Relaxation - Tension Response

Many people are aware that relaxation is positive for the body, emotions and mind. Excess tension is related to stress, and therefore negative to our life function. In order to understand more deeply why shiatsu helps a person feel better, it is good to have an understanding of how the relaxation - tension response works in the body.

The **Autonomic Nervous System** is directly linked to the relaxation - tension response. It has two branches. One is the **orthosympathetic branch** and the other is the **parasympathetic branch**. In a state of health, both work together in order to produce many of the body's functions. If the body becomes unbalanced, these two systems work out of sync.

In a balanced condition, the **orthosympathetic branch** functions positively and cooperatively with many of the body's functions. It helps the body protect itself from negative stimulation.

This is called the "flight or fight" mechanism. It is also involved in directing the body's output of energy. In an unbalanced condition and in states of stress, the orthosympathetic tends to become the body's dominating response. This creates tension and has the following negative effects on the body, emotions, and mind:

- *Fatigue
- *Anxiety
- *Abnormal blood pressure
- *Deficient immunity
- *Back/shoulder/neck pain
- *Allergies
- *Headaches
- *Feelings of being pressured
- *Apathy
- *Menstrual / reproductive problems
- *Digestive issues
- *Overeating / Undereating
- *Poor circulation
- *Lack of enthusiasm
- *Sexual dysfunction
- *Negativity

Over time these orthosympathetic responses become an unconscious habit leading to chronic stress patterns in the body, emotions and lifestyle. Overactivity of the ortho-sympathetic nervous system tends to progressively weaken the parasympathetic system and can possibly lead to more serious health problems over time.

The **parasympathetic branch** of the autonomic system stimulates all regenerative and energy building functions of the body. It plays an essential role in maintaining our vitality and well-being. It allows us to enjoy and appreciate life (fig. 2). The parasympathetic is stimulated by the same mechanism that allows us to relax.

It triggers the following activities:*

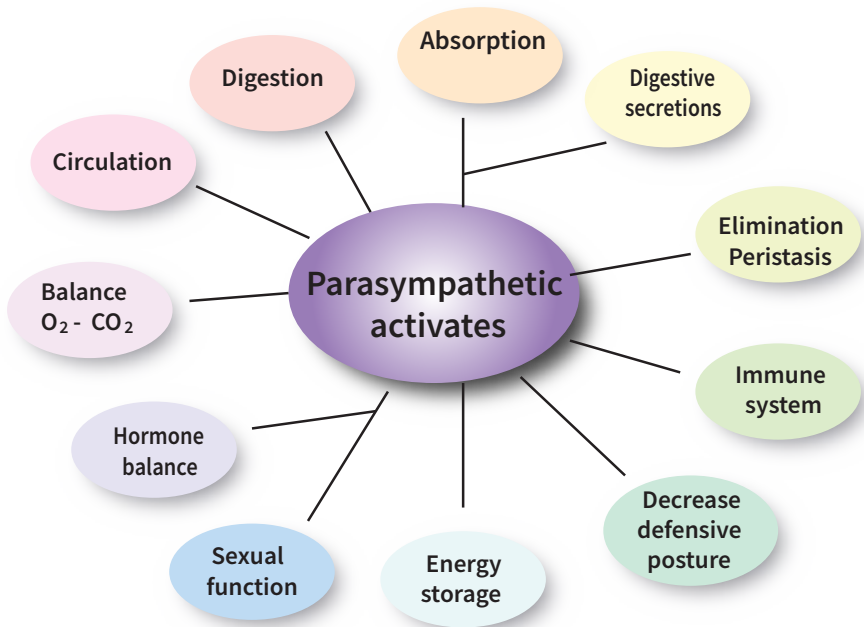


Fig. 2 Effect of the parasympathetic nervous system

(The orthosympathetic cancels or inhibits most of the parasympathetic actions)*

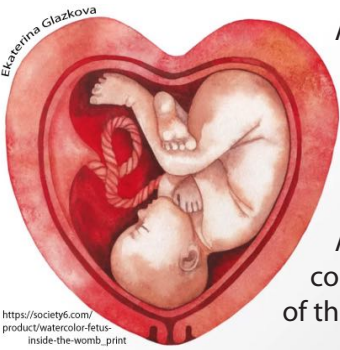
As you can see, relaxation is much more than a general idea.

It is a very specific process of the body and mind. It's related to the strength of the parasympathetic nervous system and the balance with the orthosympathetic nervous system.

The method of treatment used in my practice reduces chronic orthosympathetic tension response. It helps to regenerate and strengthen parasympathetic activities. This is accomplished by the use of the application of pressure and other bodywork techniques during a shiatsu treatment. Receiving treatments helps to retrain the body and mind to function in more relaxed patterns.

Over time, this leads to a reorientation of body/mind response. It helps to redirect energy away from a stress-depletion response and into a regenerating mode.

A Time of Support and Growth



Another very important reason why shiatsu has a beneficial and dynamic effect is because it awakens our memory of a very important time in our life. This is the time when we developed in our mother's womb.

At this time, our "growth" was tremendous and continuously stimulated by the gentle pressure of the amniotic fluid.

The pressure of the practitioner's touch correlates with this somatic memory of the body and mind.

It is a heart-centered stimulation that reminds us of a time in an environment where we could grow and express ourselves freely.

What to expect

In order to accomplish the objectives of the treatment, I use a variety of techniques.

Beginning with a general sensing of where the greatest tension patterns are, I apply pressure along the meridians or specific areas of the body.

Techniques that stretch and/or rock the body can be used or I will simply just hold certain areas with an intention. I may guide your breathing to increase effectiveness of a particular movement.

Most of the time, treatments will be very relaxing and you will feel the tension release from your body.

Some areas of the body may feel sore, tender or stiff. *This is positive and usually related to the areas of the body that need attention most.*

Sore areas are where the inner body is sending distress signals to the surface. By applying pressure to these areas, a positive stimulation is being sent back to the source of imbalance.



How many treatments does it take to notice a difference?

Generally, I have found that between 3-5 treatments (within 1-2 weeks apart) are when your body really starts to 'get it'.

When dealing with a particular issue, I recommend in coming at least that frequently at first.

Once your mind-body becomes accustomed and more responsive to the treatments, you will recognize when stress is building up in the system and when your energy is becoming stuck. You will know on your own when it's time to receive a treatment!



What to wear.

Shiatsu treatments are done with the recipient fully clothed.

It is best to wear loose-fitting comfortable clothing (say, as opposed to tight denim jeans). Socks are optional. I also recommend not eating too heavily an hour or so before your session, as well as refraining from wearing strong fragrances.

Traditionally, shiatsu is done on a futon on the floor, but I also have a massage table available.

You can state your preference at the time of scheduling.

How long does a treatment take?

Most clients schedule an hour, though I also offer shorter and longer options (from 30 to 90 minutes.)

After a treatment...

Immediate effects

After a treatment, you will feel more relaxed. You will notice that your breathing has become deeper and you may have the sensation that energy is flowing through the body.

The emotions are more calm and life situations seem to have a more balanced perspective.

Short term results

Receiving shiatsu helps to relieve pain in the body. It improves posture, digestion, elimination and breathing. It gives an overall sense of well-being and supports a positive attitude.

If a person has a stressful lifestyle, they may feel the need to have a bit more rest than usual after the first few sessions.

Long term results

Shiatsu helps to repattern the body and mind. It encourages the body and mind to develop more balanced and relaxed ways to function.

The choices we start to make support a healthier lifestyle. This may include better dietary habits, going out in nature, exercise, and enjoying good quality hobbies.

We also begin to appreciate and better utilize what we already have in life.

Going Forward...

In addition to receiving regular bodywork, here are some suggestions for further improving the quality of your life.

Nutrition

Changing dietary habits and providing the body with what it needs can improve the way one feels. Positive results can occur in a very short time.

Exercise/Movement



Moving the body on a regular basis can greatly contribute to feeling well. It improves our ability to respond more enthusiastically to what is going on around us. By improving our circulation, we feel better emotionally and psychologically.

It is highly recommended to find your own unique way of exercising and movement. Feel free to discuss this during your treatment sessions.

Going outside is one of the most effective activities in supporting your healing. Keep outdoor activities high on your list of things to do.

Psychological Counseling

If you feel drawn to seeing a psychologist, I recommend finding one that understands the mind/body connection.

Humor

Laughter and humor have been used since ancient times as an essential factor of health and longevity. Get a funny book, or seek out humorous videos. It is possible to see the lighter side of life, and even humor in your most trying times. Conversely, take breaks from news and media that create feelings of tension, overwhelm and helplessness.

Creative Outlets

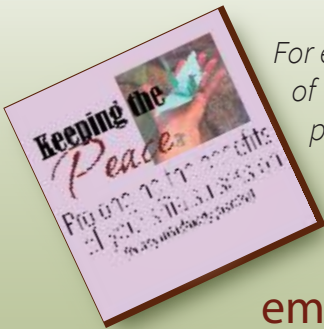
Everyone is naturally creative. As energy becomes balanced, you will begin to recognize your own unique creative abilities. In the meantime, anything from drawing, flower arranging, gardening to woodworking, pottery making, and sculpting will help stimulate the creative impulse. Even cleaning your home and paying bills can become creative and fun!

Listening

Learning to listen is a very effective vehicle for healing and unfolding the creative process. Becoming a good listener can solve many of the problems we have to deal with in life.

Meditation

Meditation has been shown to increase the regenerating functions of the body. It calms the emotions and the mind.



For even more practices to prolong the benefits of your bodywork session (or any mind/body practice) look for my ebook, "Keeping the Peace" on the website:

embodygrace.com/resources

Restorative Movement classes and more are also available.

Find it all on embodygrace.com

Making appointments:

Location:

329 Gordon Drive
Exton, PA 19341

Book a session or reserve your spot in a class online:

embodygrace.com/book-now

Office Hours:

Tuesday: 9:30am - 7:00pm
Thursdday: 9:30am - 7:00pm
Friday: 9:30am - 7:00pm
Saturday: 9:30am - 2:00 pm

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Please visit embodygrace.com for details about classes and other offerings. Sign up for my email updates and other gifts.





About Gina Loree Bryan

Gina is an AOBTA-certified shiatsu practitioner, having graduated from the International School of Shiatsu in Doylestown, PA.

She is also certified as a Restorative Exercise Specialist*, which she offers through classes or private coaching, along with *qigong*-based movement classes.

Gina has been practicing in the Chester County, PA area since 2005.

** See nutritousmovement.com for more information*

(Many thanks to Saul Goodman and the Int'l School of Shiatsu for their permission to use some of the text and images from the ISS handbook)

Notes

(Use this space to jot down any questions, impressions - about shiatsu, your session, whatever!)



Made for you in the spirit of health blessings and peace.

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