



Well-Being for the Senses



Well-being for the five senses

Scientists are beginning to believe that our first sense as a newborn is the sense of touch, which comes as no surprise to a massage therapist like myself. I also believe it is often one we receive less of, but don't necessarily need less of, as we age. Touch infers safety, security and familiarity to a baby, are these not requirements of being an adult too? The pandemic severely restricted our access to human connection, and it is so important we allow ourselves to reach out or be reached by others. We have all heard the phrase by John Donne,

*No man is an island,
Entire of itself;
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.*

As a massage therapist this hands-on approach has been my passion and my daily work. I do, however, fully appreciate that the somatosensory system (that's touch to you and me) does not work in isolation, and neither do I. Our other senses are part of a therapeutic experience and also help develop my own skills of intuition.

The five senses ... plus one

Somatosensory (touch) – the gift of touch allows us to explore our environment, connect with others and convey support or compassion to others. Who hasn't experienced that feeling of wanting to touch when you see velvet, silk or fur?

Visual system (sight) – we are constantly bamboozled by images in our everyday lives. How many hours do we stare at a square screen? A computer at work, a phone on the way home and a television in the evening. Do you dare even add up the hours you spend?

Auditory system (sound) – I feel we all have surround sound in the modern world, the practise of peacefulness and quiet is dying out. Yet it has to be one of the most beneficial things you can do for your well-being. Just 'be well' in peace and quiet for a short time.

Gustatory system (taste) – modern science suggests that our sense of taste also relates to touch. How many of us cannot eat a certain food because of the texture on the tongue or the feeling it leaves in the mouth?

Olfactory system (smell) – the only sense with a direct link to the brain and therefore the most potent if used well. Can we all remember the polished floors of a classroom? Do you remember the perfume of a favourite, or despised, teacher? Are you immediately back in the classroom when you come across the scent again? Scent is very much tied to memory, with both positive or negative memories.

Proprioception system (awareness) – we all have some awareness of our physical aspect to others, but if you do not regularly have contact with others, or movement is limited, then these skills can be lost.

I am not advocating a return to pre-technology times, but I am advocating harnessing ancient wisdom for modern well-being.

A well-being prescription helps you write your own script to become the leading player in your own life. You can take time to think and discuss what may be invisible or unrecognised causes of pain, stress and anxiety. This ultimately leads to poor well-being.

The Senses	Well-being for the senses	How it works
Touch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self massage • Pressure points • Lymphatic drainage • Reflexology points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personally designed prescription • Ease tension • Lower stress and anxiety • Positive coping strategies
Sight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visualisation • Colour and mood • Home space • Work space • Safe space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing through the fog • Influencing mood
Sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening • Talking • Communicating • Uplifting sound • Calming sound • The sound of silence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A therapeutic ear • A holistic viewpoint
Smell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential oils • Perfumery • Mood fragrances • Positive/negative associations • Memory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therapeutic use of scent • Scents to enhance mood • Scent to calm or rejuvenate
Taste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diet • Nutrition • The 80/20 rule • Small changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dietary tips • Accountability for nutrition
Proprioception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness • Mobility • Movement • Fitness for life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility exercise prescription • Movement at your level • Goals for what you can achieve

What is a personal well-being prescription?

Senses	How can I benefit?
Touch (tactile sense)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhanced body awareness• Release of tension• Self massage techniques• Trigger points• Instant stress or anxiety relief tools• Acupressure points for specific conditions
Sight (visual sense)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn how to recognise where you are now, and where you are heading as you improve your well-being• Use of colour for confidence and mood enhancement• Find your environment
Sound (auditory sense)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Someone to listen and communicate with• Find ways to use sound, or silence, for relaxation• Using sounds to motivate or calm• Finding your tribe amongst the chatter
Smell (olfactory sense)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discover your relationship with scent• Therapeutic uses of fragrance• Fragrance cards for therapy and memory• Scent as safety
Taste (gustatory sense)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relaxation and lower stress levels allow better digestion• Awareness of how nutrition affects your well-being• Develop good eating habits• Understand the 80/20 rule
Proprioception	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Body self-awareness• How others see you• Finding your place in a crowd

Your personal prescription is by nature individual, but here is a very brief outline of how I helped client A learn to switch off. This was only one aspect of their well-being journey, a personal prescription will contain much more detail.

Client A struggles to relax on an evening.

- Touch - shown acupressure points on the face for relaxation, a relaxing face oil blended to personal taste
- Sight – learnt how to utilise visualisation of a sunny beach
- Sound – sound of rolling waves on a headset or imagined
- Smell – a blend of essential oils of May Chang, Melissa, Lime and Orange, to conjure memories of warm Mediterranean beaches
- Taste – orange, lime or lemon in water, with a straw and hint of mint if you like to create a mocktail
- Proprioception – visualisation of lying on a deserted beach, taught how to use Progressive Relaxation Technique.

It may sound like a lot to do, but this can be a 10 minute chill-out at the end of a day. What you need to do this is be specific about what works for you and be given the tools to do it. That is where I can help.



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