



The London Massage Company

Newsletter 03

Hiya!

We hope you all enjoyed your August whether at home or on your hols. Perhaps some of you were busy notching up those CPD points..... we'd love to hear about it if you were!

This month we've got a couple of fun articles on what Jane and I have been up to. So put your feet up, relax and enjoy.

The massage binge

I took off on my hols to Sri Lanka (SL). If you love to travel and haven't had the pleasure then I would highly recommend it. It's a beautiful, calm country which was a joy to travel around. I could take up the entire newsletter chatting about SL's highlights, but I'd like to share with you a little of my massage binge!

Like many therapists I rarely make the time to have that well needed massage and in SL made up for lost time! It was a great opportunity for me to experience Aruveydic massage for the first time. Aruveydic massage is the staple massage in SL and available in abundance from the most modest of medical practices to the high-end hotels. I won't go into details about the philosophy and rationale behind Aruveydic massage as I'm sure many of you know about, if not qualified in, this area.

Welcome!

What's up?

//The massage binge
//Ones to watch
//Massage-a-thon, The report
//Hall of Fab Things
//Other Stuff

My most enjoyable session was with a young Indian guy called Kieran who had been poached from his spa work in Kerala, India and was now living and working at the Eco retreat.

The 'therapy rooms' were set out side which really made that extra WOW factor for me, one for massage and one for the Aruveydic oil treatments. But to top it off was the carefully thought through design. It completed this totally sensory moment.

The tall grasses surrounding the 'room' giving you your privacy, stood in a shallow bed of water. As the sun set and the light began to dim, the breeze rustled through the grasses in harmony with the trees. You could hear the

tiny frogs chatting, then the gentle 'plop' as they flopped into the water from their lotus leaf. I was away with fairies, or should I say frogs.



The massage was great too. I was sat on a chair facing out towards trees. Kieran softly sung a buddhist prayer before pouring the warm, soft oil onto the crown of my head and beginning a terrific head and shoulder massage. I loved one particular move whereby he started at the mastoid

Ones to Watch: More For your CPDs

//Know Your Nerves, The College of Body Science, 9th-11th October. A 3 day course to start to familiarise you with the names, pathways and patterns of innervation of skin and muscles. For more details on the course and how to sign up www.collegeofbodyscience.com/nerves.htm

//A good website to keep on your favourites is www.cpdo.net.

They have a wealth of courses and lectures for you to attend
//Still to come is CAMExpo, London Excel 6th & 7th Oct. For those of you attending we'll be there running our Soft Tissue Release and Effective Stretching workshops. If you're not on a workshop then we'll be hanging out for the day if you want to say Hi. We'll be hanging around the coffee place (The one and only) after the workshops.

//Also that weekend The Back Show, London Olympia. See what's on offer at www.backshowexpo.co.uk



The Massage Binge

process with his thumb, slid distally to levator scapula following it to its insertion at the superior angle of the scapula, where normally I would stop, but he continued the move, maintaining a great pressure, down the medial border of the scapula before trailing off. This fluid movement felt **so** nice.

Then it was time for me to lie down on the couch for my full-body treatment. Kieran used just one stroke which was similar to effleurage but crossed with milking. I can only describe it as a gliding push which was performed towards the feet. I felt really good and Kieran had a great therapist's touch. He also used some static pressures on my lumbar spine, which really hit the spot.

I was massaged in prone then supine, including my face which, for me, is always heaven! Still with my eyes closed my dreaminess was pleasantly interrupted by Kieran placing cool, smooth stones onto my chakras. After the massage I learnt that the stones are taken from a bowl of water which added to the delicious sensation.

Sadly my time was up. I finally managed to drag myself off the table in that lovely massage stupor, with all the calmness and tranquillity of the world. Usually at this point I would have had the pleasure of a steam in a great sarcophagus-like steam bed, but unfortunately they were having problems with it so my treatment had to end there. Instead Keiran and I exchanged massage experiences. He was

asking me what it was like and how it worked for a massage therapist in the UK which wasn't dissimilar to his own experiences in India.

He'd originally been working with an Aruveydic doctor who would refer the client, or in this instance patient, to Kieran. The doctor would give instruction as to how the massage should be performed, with what strength and how often. He would be treating perhaps 2 or 3 patients a day which he loved.

Kieran then decided to try his hand in the Spa business which he informed me is big business in India and part of a huge growth market, however, he wasn't enjoying working in the spa at all. The spas are run like clock work and are in the business of making money, not treating the client. He would have 1 hour in which he would have to prepare the client for massage, perform the treatment I'd just experienced, including the steam, and then get them out again. Relaxing? Beneficial? I don't think so! His account was certainly reminiscent of a couple of accounts I'd heard from UK therapists working in UK spas.

For now Kieran is happy to be in SL and I was happy he was there too! However, he was uncertain about the length of time he would stay because tourism is quite badly effected by SL's ethnic conflict. Kieran said they can be without clients anything from a couple of weeks to a couple of months. This is such a shame because SL's potential as a tourist destination is enormous

We began to talk about treatments and I asked him if he ever had the chance to received massage and how did he look after himself as a therapist. He received massage when he was training others as he was always their body, but when I asked him if he self-treated he smiled, but I'm not sure if this was with mild amusement at my question or if he just thought I was barking mad!

He did say his hands ached sometimes and so would put them in a bowl of water for a while. His arms too sometimes gave him trouble. I suggested that to relieve the tension in his forearms he could use an object that would allow him to roll his forearms across it and therefore self massage. He looked a little bemused so I went on to explain what a foot roller was!

The final crack for Kieran was when I asked if he'd considered replacing his thumb work on the pressure points with some sort of tool, perhaps a small wooden ball. I think he would have liked reassurance that I didn't come from the moon!

It was great to chat gain another perspective. I learnt a lot from Kieran about Aruveydic massage and medicine and I hope he'll try my self-treat tips. If I had been travelling alone, I would have definitely taken a few days out and exchanged more tips and techniques with him but alas, it was time to move on.



Jane's Massage-a-thon 2007

Have you ever noticed how sometimes, something quite small and insignificant turns into something quite large and important? Have you noticed how sometimes, you're thinking about doing something, going somewhere or making a change in your life and as you mull it over, a chance encounter, a conversation you overhear, a sign you pass by or a TV programme you catch only the last five minutes of, turns out to be the first link in a chain of events that eventually leads you to what it is you need?

About six months ago on the way home from work I bought a copy of The Big Issue to help pass the time on the remainder of my journey. Aimlessly, I flicked through the magazine and found myself studying the last few pages. In tiny, tiny print, smaller than any of the other advertisements was an ad for Cross Cultural Solutions (CCS). The print was in fact so small, that I had to squint to read it and made a mental note to visit the optician for a check up sometime soon. This charity was looking for volunteers to help out in a variety of placements across the world and, perhaps because I warmed to the idea of 'cultural sharing', I tore out the advertisement and pocketed it. That was that.

About a month later I discovered the advert faded and crumpled, having been washed with my jeans, and could only just make out the web site address. I left the faded scrap on my desk and it was not for another week or so, out of sheer curiosity that I

checked it out (www.crossculturalsolutions.org). It was interesting: This charity had a lot of schemes offering volunteers placements in different countries to help local people in their communities. The focus was on supporting and sharing. I was drawn to the fact that this was a non-profit-making organization with aims to 'empower people to affect positive change'. There was something inherently good about the website too: it wasn't pushy; it didn't want me to sign up immediately and the 'vision' and 'mission' statements seemed truly heartfelt.

I don't know if you're like me, but I've always felt comforted by the fact that there's always someone else to take up these kinds of challenges. There's always someone on TV or on the radio who's been there and done that and saved the whales and built something abroad. And it makes me feel less guilty about not having done it, knowing that there are people for whom that is their life. Because whilst I've always liked the idea of temporarily mucking in, I hate to feel pushed into things. If there's even the slightest hint of coercion I withdraw. I need to be ready. But somehow, I never have been ready for this kind of volunteer work. There has always been something else that's needed doing, a new job, a new course, a relationship breakdown, a relationship starting up, another room to be decorated, a dog to foster. Volunteering abroad was something I imagined kids did in their 'Gap year', roughing it in far flung places with nothing but a rucksack and a handful of

useful phrases torn from an out-of-date guide book. Now that I was in my forties it seemed like I'd missed the boat. There was still that small part of me that wanted to help out, but I didn't want to be thrown in with a load of 18-year-olds away from home for the first time. That totally put me off. And it made me feel a little sad. I wondered if I should have done it back then, when I was 18 and it was the right time for that sort of thing. But as you've probably learned if you're reading this, once you decide to do something, that *is* the right time, it becomes the right time by the mere nature of the fact that you've decided to do it. It's only ever viewed as the wrong time when it doesn't fit into someone else's expectations of what you should be doing with your life. If you decide to do it, then its absolutely, definitely, positively and unquestionably the Right Time.

I know that volunteering abroad for the first time in October 2007 is going to be the right time for me. Volunteering in Morocco is going to be the right place. I visited Morocco for Christmas and loved it. There I spoke incomprehensible French, (learned more than 30 years ago in an all girls' school with radiators that left third degree burns on your skin if you sat too close to them in winter time). The Moroccans I met loved my attempts to communicate and seemed to understand me (although I have to admit I did a lot of gesticulating) and being somewhere so culturally different was hugely stimulating. Everyone was friendly and as an added bonus, drinking mint tea for three weeks I lost 3/4 of a stone in



weight. So Morocco it was going to be.

The first (external) confirmation I had that I was doing the right thing was when I enrolled for the programme. Once she had taken my details the CCS receptionist on the other end of the phone said 'Wahey! It's really exciting! You're going to have a fantastic time!' and she had that genuineness about her people can't hide when they're enthusiastic for something. I knew she really meant it. 'Your programme organiser's just been there. She said it was brilliant. You must talk to her. It's going to be great!'

So, although it was more than 6 months away, for weeks I went around feeling really optimistic. CCS kept me posted and sent me information such as useful books I should read and ways to prepare myself to work in a culture that was different to my own. I had to fill in a skills questionnaire and when they discovered I was a physiotherapist, asked if I would like to work with disabled children. I said I didn't mind what I did. Then they sent me a pack about fund raising. Most volunteers raise the funds needed for their three week stay to ensure we are not a burden on the people looking after us whilst we work. The money we raise pays for our accommodation, food, cleaning, laundry and taking us to and from our places of work. I carried the fund raising information around with me, all the time wondering what on earth I could do to raise the necessary £1500.

Day after day I wracked my brain. What could I do? One of the CCS

ideas was to hold a cake stall and sell home made cakes, another was to paint children's faces. I quite liked both ideas but figured that if any of the parents at the local school tasted my cakes they probably wouldn't let me paint the faces of their kids. No, culinary fund raising was not going to be my forté. And so each day I kept asking myself 'What can I do? What can I do?' until one day someone said, 'well, what *can* you do?' 'I can massage,' I replied without hesitation. And that's when the penny dropped. Doreen and Dympna (from the training school Quantum Metta) and I had talked about organizing a massage-a-thon to raise money for charity once before, but like most small businesses, we were all pretty busy enjoying all of the other projects we were involved in, so had not yet progressed the idea. The more I thought about it the more I realized it could work.

On 26th August 2007, a hot Bank Holiday Sunday, a Massage-a-thon was held in London to raise money for my CCS programme. Twenty-six therapists volunteered to provide treatments for 31 clients throughout the day and together raised £720. The Moving Arts Base let me hire their venue at a reduced rate and Quantum Metta very kindly let me use all of their couches and couch covers and Thai Yoga Massage mats. Many therapists brought their own towels and oils even though these were provided, and miraculously, everyone was on time and all clients got massaged and all therapists got to provide treatments and everyone seemed to have a

great day. Which was a relief. I'd not slept for three nights worrying that I might forget something and kept going over my checklist in my head: spare couch covers, oils, oil bottles, wipes, antiseptic, huge mountain of spare towels, timetable, telephone numbers, promotional material from CCS, receipt book, etc.

On the day of the Massage-a-thon I met lots of therapists, some I knew and some I had never met before. It was a hot day. Both therapists and clients could have chosen to quit and enjoy the sunshine but instead they turned up and helped out. I am eternally grateful to them all. Afterwards, when everything was eventually packed away and my flat looking like a laundry with wet towels draped over every clothes horse, chair back and door, I asked some of the therapists what it had been like volunteering:

"I really enjoyed it. There was a strong sense of team work with all the therapist which was nice. It was a really good experience for me, also been able to watch other therapists: I've never seen holistic massage before so I found that interesting." Grace Shimwell, student Thai Yoga Massage Therapist.

"I had everything that I needed - the equipment and venue was great. Plenty of space (which was great for both therapists and clients....so didn't feel like some kind of massage factory!). I was more aware of my body posture than normal as I was able to watch other therapists too. I would definitely help out again, and encourage others to help



out.”
Yvonne, Sports Massage Therapist and student physiotherapist.

“I was apprehensive before going...but after starting the massage and being in that environment my energy was turned around. The set up was really good and everything seemed to be catered for. The space was great and the vibe was good. It was interesting to see other people practicing Thai Massage and I think one woman was giving a type of Tui Na or Chinese massage as I was finishing off - so it was interesting to see other practitioners at work. I would do it again and recommend it to other practitioners definitely. It's nice to give from time to time.” Susan Morse, Massage Practitioner

“For me it was useful because its always inspiring to give. It always helps to be in a supportive atmosphere. Although I found it difficult being in a room with so many other people...I do think it was a good opportunity as a student and I would recommend it.” Surekha Gurewan, student Thai Yoga Massage Therapist

So now I am looking forward to spending time abroad in October, helping disabled children in whatever capacity Cross Cultural Solutions feel I may be useful. Looking back I wonder what was the first link in this chain of events that has not yet come to an end? Was it tearing out that advertisement in The Big Issue? Or was it the mere fact of buying the magazine in the first place? Perhaps the first link was the trip I took in December when I chanced to travel to Morocco on

my own with my seven year old son, trekking into the desert with people I didn't know? Has something small and insignificant in your life ever lead to something bigger? What chain of events are currently playing out for you? Where did they start?

Donations are still being gratefully accepted towards the programme.

There will be a second Massage-a-thon, December 14th 2008, also to raise money for charity. So we'll give you details nearer the time so you can get involved!

Hall of Fab Things: We're loving.....

1) Since Jane fractured her knee with added ACL tear..."lying on my back jacked up on painkillers. I am drooling over the latest Boden catalogue." Better than sleeping or other things you do in bed.....

2) Custard tarts (look, somebody's got to love them and we're both one of those body's!)

3) Curry! Not only did Zoë binge on massage in SL but curry too; breakfast lunch and dinner, what a way to dine!

4) *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, children's book by Eric Carle

5) *Rebounders*, the poor person's trampoline. 10 minutes bouncing and you feel really righteous without having had to put on running shoes or lift anything remotely heavy. Fab for flab (especially if you've been eating too many custard tarts and curries).

6) Our own pod people. If you haven't yet seen them check out our website. We've risked putting two of them together occassionally and anticipate some interesting procreations. Watch this space.....

Other Stuff

Yumi Tamura is looking for Reflexology case study clients. If you are able to have a treatment once a week, each session 1hr (4 treatments in total) are available weekday evenings or weekends, can get to Maida Vale area or Kentish Town, or are happy to have Yumi come to your house, then please call her on: 079 0601 3316 or email : yumi_tamura@hotmail.com

Catherine Hedges is looking for a sports massage therpaist in Hertforshire or surrounding area. If you are one or know of someone, then please get in touch with us so that we can pass the details on. Thanks.

That's it for this month. Drop us a line or two if you've got some stuff to tell us and your fellow professionals allied to health!

Hopefully see some of you at CAMExpo.

Take care Zoë & Jane

