

THE CENTER for CLINICAL MASSAGE

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Massage and bodywork for allergies

Relief for congestion and pain

All year long, allergy sufferers complain of sinus congestion, headaches due to pressure, and exhaustion. But springtime allergies are especially known for the havoc they wreak.

Techniques that help

Bodywork can bolster your immune system and may even lessen the need for allergy medications. Massage to the head, face and neck can help clear mucus from the nose and throat. Pressure point therapies such as shiatsu, acupressure and reflexology can be particularly helpful because they relieve congestion at the same time they encourage the body to return to a healthful balance. Hot stone massage is another effective technique that can be especially soothing around the nose and eyes.

Releasing trigger points

Massage is also known for its ability to release trigger points, knots that radiate pain to other spots. With massage, you can receive relaxing work to the face and around the eyes, as well as the upper back

and shoulders where many trigger points to the head and face are located. When those areas are released, your headaches and congestion may also be relieved.

Stress reduction helps

Few studies researching massage therapy and allergy relief exist, but a 2009 Ohio State University study showed that even slight stress and anxiety can substantially worsen a person's allergic reaction to some routine allergens. Massage recipients the world over report that massage helps reduce their stress. You may well find that simply relaxing with massage helps relieve your allergy symptoms.

If you suffer from hay fever or some other spring allergy, try one or more sessions of massage this season. It may make all the difference.



Massage and pressure point therapies can relieve congestion and reduce pain in the head and face.



Before you begin vigorous activity, warm up with a brisk walk or gentle stretching.

Preparing for action

Three tips for getting moving in the spring

Springtime marks the end of winter hibernation. Like so many others, you may feel the need to get out of the house and start moving. Start the season right with these tips.

Start slowly and gradually

Spring is the time to recondition our bodies for outdoor activities. Whether it's baseball, running or yard work, you may wake up one Saturday, feeling ready to go. But it is easy to get injured if you move too fast!

Warm up

Starting slowly and gradually before brisk activity can really pay off. Go outside and march in place for five minutes or take a quick walk around the block. Then gently stretch your neck, arms and legs.

Play smarter, not harder

As you begin your gardening or engaging in your sport, focus on using your body "smarter, not harder." Switch activities every 30 minutes so you are not using the same muscles for extended periods. Take regular rest breaks and stretch the muscles you've been using.

Ramping up your outdoor activities carefully will give your body time to adjust and could prevent soreness and even injury.

Meditation for spring

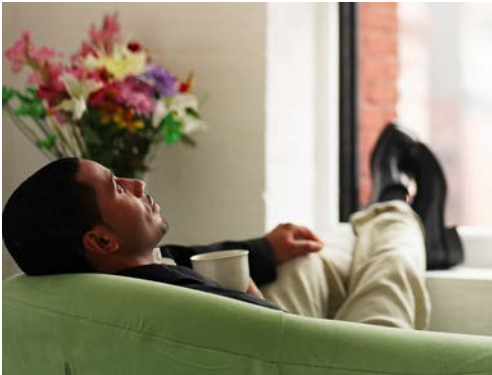
Review and plan your life for a more satisfying year

Spring is a potent season to look over the past and institute changes for the future. It is a good time to set clear goals, or intentions, that reflect your desires. This spring, try letting your impulses follow the growth you see in nature, and see how it affects your own perceptions and desires. To get started, try this personal reflection and writing exercise.

Spring meditation

1. Find a favorite place to sit quietly, indoors or out. Breathe fully and deeply for a few minutes, keeping your attention on the breath.
2. Ask yourself: What can I clear out or let go of from the past year as I move into this fresh season of growth and rebirth? Observe your thoughts and feelings for 3 or 4 minutes.
3. Write down three things you would like to let go of. Put this “Let Go” list aside.
4. Now ask yourself: What do I desire in this new season? What seeds would I like to plant? Again see what answers come to you.
5. Write down three intentions for the coming year.
6. Take the “Let Go” list and burn it, or bury it in the soil.
7. Go back to the “Intentions” list. If you would like, illustrate or add color to it. Hang it up somewhere you will see it each day as a reminder of the seeds you have sown inside.

If you rearrange your life so that you plant new creative ideas in spring every year, you may be amazed by the increase in satisfaction you experience, as well as a deeper connection to the flow of nature’s seasons.



For a rejuvenating spring ritual, reflect on letting go of the past and sowing the seeds of new intentions.



*Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire
of Spring The Winter Garment of
Repentance fling: The Bird of Time
has but a little way to fly — and Lo!
the Bird is on the Wing.
—Omar Khayyám*