

Avoid Making False Claims

Making false claims and inflated promises to clients about our work is unethical. It sets the client up for unreasonable expectations and can come back to haunt us. We'd all like to think we can help every client that comes in the door, which simply isn't true. Promising a client that you can "fix" their issues can backfire on you, in spite of your best intentions. You can make a statement such as "Many people with ____ have experienced relief from massage," but assuring them that massage is going to "fix" *any* condition is wrong. There are numerous reasons that people experience pain and dysfunction, including the possibility that they may have an undiagnosed pathology that they (and we) know nothing about. Leading them to expect too much out of a treatment is never a good idea. We should stick to expressing that we *hope* massage is going to benefit them and that we'll do our best to help them feel better, instead of *promising* them that it will.

False claims sometimes go beyond having too much confidence in our own ability to help someone into the realm of making medical claims that are out of the scope of practice, or worse, that have no basis in reality. We are obligated to receive education in anatomy, physiology, kinesiology, and pathology to obtain a license, and yet, many therapists ignore those sciences and make up their own versions of how the human body works. Making such claims is unethical. Imagine the following scenario:

A new client mentions to you during the massage that she's hoping to start a family soon. You jump right in and tell her you will release the adhesions around her ovaries and align the uterus so she can conceive. She suddenly sits up, tells you this session is over, informs you that she is a medical doctor, that she will be reporting you to the board for violating scope of practice, and will furthermore be spreading the word on social media and online review sites that you are a charlatan.

How do you know she has adhesions around her ovaries, or that her uterus is "out of alignment"? You don't. Making false or inflated claims to clients can harm your professional reputation, result in disciplinary action, or even end your career. Stick to the truth and avoid making unethical claims.